



Independent Custody Visiting Scheme

Annual Report 2022-23

Police Investigation Centre



CONTENTS

Background	3
Introduction by Tim Passmore, Police and Crime Commissioner	4
Comment from Rachel Kearton, Chief Constable	4
Comment from Chief Inspector Rob Wicks, Head of Custody	5
Organisation of the ICV Scheme in Suffolk	6
Details of Visits	7
Detained Persons Statistics - 1 April 2022 - 31 March 2023	8
Findings of Independent Custody Visitors	9
Developments During 2022/23	11
Looking Forward	13
Conclusion and Additional Information	14

Background

In 1981 several outbreaks of unrest occurred in major cities throughout the country. The most significant of these disorders took place in Brixton when hundreds of young people attacked property and the police. After days of unrest, these serious incidents led to the government ordering an urgent inquiry and appointing Lord Scarman to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the events.

As part of the recommendations arising from the investigation and following report, Lord Scarman advocated a system for members of the public from local communities to inspect the way the police detained people in their custody. Originally referred to as lay visiting, independent custody visiting is the system that has been developed to meet this recommendation.

The Police and Crime Act 2002 made custody visiting statutory with the Home Office introducing the [Codes of Practice for Independent Custody Visiting](#). The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 introduced Police and Crime Commissioners and gave them the responsibility for operating and overseeing the scheme in their police area.

Introduction by Tim Passmore

Police & Crime Commissioner for Suffolk

This report provides an overview of the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme in Suffolk and details what the custody visitors have been doing between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023.

Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) are volunteers from our local community who visit the two Police Investigation Centres (PICs) in the county to check on the welfare of detained persons and the conditions in which they are held. They help me to fulfil my responsibility to ensure that policing in Suffolk is carried out fairly, in accordance with relevant legislation and Home Office guidance, and with respect for the human rights of all those coming into contact with the police.

I am very grateful to the ICVs in Suffolk for their dedication and commitment in undertaking this important role. I would also thank the Constabulary for their co-operation and facilitating the successful operation of the Scheme.



ICVs continue to give me reassurance that, in Suffolk, the treatment of detained persons is fair and in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (referred to as PACE) and the Safer Detention Guidelines.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Passmore".

Tim Passmore, Police and Crime Commissioner

Comment from Rachel Kearton

Suffolk's Chief Constable

ICVs provide the Suffolk Constabulary with a voice that helps us understand this critical area of our business ensuring we are continually learning and improving the service we provide.

Visitors to our PICs help us to identify areas for development at an early stage, assisting us in continually evaluating and refining the way we interact with those brought into custody in order to maintain our high standards.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachel Kearton".

Rachel Kearton, Chief Constable



Comment from Chief Inspector Rob Wicks

Head of Custody for Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies

Having moved into the role of Head of Custody for Norfolk and Suffolk I have been extremely impressed by the way that detained persons across the six Police Investigation Centres (PICs) have been cared for and managed. I took command of custody in July 2022 and have already overseen several improvements in the provision of detainee care and management. 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). The ICVs provide me with direct feedback relating to detainee management and care which is used to ensure that 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 quarterly meetings with the ICV Scheme Managers 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 a variety of other custody functions. The independent scrutiny panel remains one of very few such groups Nationally and has been identified as best practice. The fantastic work in Suffolk and Norfolk has meant that all Constabularies Nationwide have been advised to follow our example. As a command we are currently advising a number of other Custody managers as to how to set up a scrutiny panel.

I am very much looking forward to attending the upcoming ICV training day where I will get the opportunity to meet even more members of the team. Suffolk is lucky to have such a committed team of ICVs, and it has been a pleasure to work with them.



Organisation of the ICV Scheme in Suffolk

The Independent Custody Visiting Scheme in Suffolk comprises two designated Panels to ensure that visits are undertaken at the Constabulary's operational custody Police Investigation Centres (PICs) at Bury St Edmunds and Martlesham. There are 30 cells at the Martlesham PIC and 24 at Bury St Edmunds. There are six PICs located across Norfolk and Suffolk and they operate under a joint custody function.

ICVs are volunteers who work in pairs and make unannounced visits on a weekly basis to the two PICs located in Suffolk.

As at 31 March 2023, there were 15 ICVs participating in the Scheme across the county, 9 on the Bury St Edmunds Panel and 6 on the Martlesham Panel.

The following table provides a summary of the custody visitors by gender, age and ethnicity:

Suffolk ICVs		Bury St Edmunds	Martlesham	Total
Gender	Male	2	4	6
	Female	7	2	9
Age	18-29	0	0	0
	30-39	1	0	1
	40-49	0	1	1
	50-59	2	0	2
	60-69	2	2	4
	70+	4	3	7
Ethnicity	White British			13
	White Irish			1
	Asian - Indian			1

During the period 1 April 2022 - 31 March 2023 nine volunteers were appointed to the Scheme and seven volunteers left the Scheme, all for personal or work-related reasons.



Details of Visits

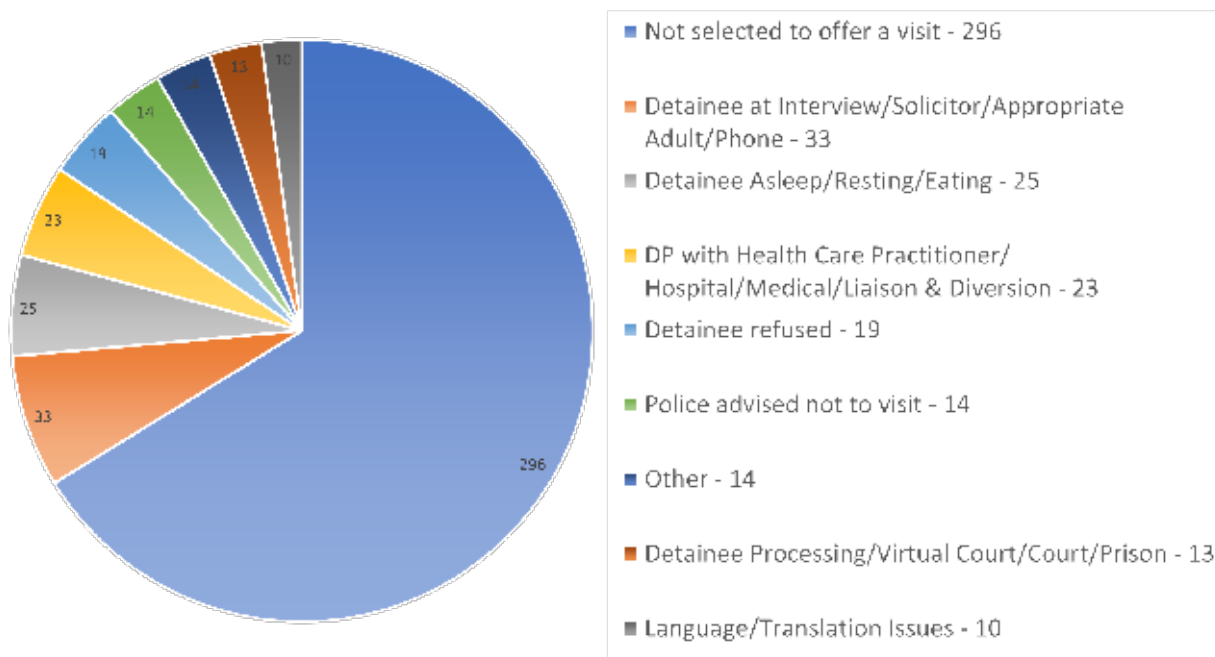
Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, a total of 100 visits were made by ICVs to the PICs. 655 persons were detained in custody at the time visits were conducted and 208 of the detainees were visited. The overall throughput for the PICs located in Suffolk for the year was 9,802 (an increase when compared to 9,304 the previous year). Whilst offered a visit, there is no obligation for a detained person to speak with ICVs.

More detail in respect of visits to the Bury St Edmunds and Martlesham PICs is provided below:

Panel	No. of visits	No. of detainees held	No. of detainees available to visit	No. of detainees visited	Percentage of detainees seen of those available	No. of detainees not visited*
Bury St Edmunds	49	282	119	102	86%	180
Martlesham	51	373	125	106	85%	267
Total	100	655	244	208	85%	447

**Note: There are a number of reasons why detained persons are not visited. For example, the detainee might refuse the visit or the police may advise against it for health and safety reasons. The category 'not visited' is broken down in the chart below to show the reasons detained persons were not visited during the period. 66% of the detainees not seen were 'not selected by ICVs' themselves as they will have focused their time in custody on more in-depth interviews with fewer detainees and scrutiny of their custody records, rather than brief interviews with all detainees held at the time of the visit.*

Breakdown of reasons detainees not visited – Total 447 not seen:



Breakdown of visit by days and times:

Day of the Week		Time	
Monday	24		
Tuesday	25	0700 - 1000	16
Wednesday	14	1000 - 1300	22
Thursday	17	1300 - 1600	14
Friday	10	1600 - 1900	29
Saturday	8	1900 - 2200	18
Sunday	2	2200 - 0700	1

ICVs are encouraged to vary the times and days of their visits as much as possible.

Detained Persons Statistics-1 April 2022-31 March 2023

Overall Number of Detainees

Bury St Edmunds PIC

Martlesham PIC

Total

Detainee Numbers

4542

5260

9802

Ethnicity of Detainees

White - North European

Black

White - South European

Asian

Middle Eastern

Chinese, Japanese or South East Asian

Unknown

Detainee Numbers

7797

842

558

172

60

22

351

Ethnicity of Detainees (captured at the time of visits)

White - North European

Black

White - South European

Asian

Middle Eastern

Chinese, Japanese or South East Asian

Unknown

Detainee Numbers

429

72

85

11

4

1

23

Number visited by ICVs

137

24

36

6

0

1

4

Gender of Detainees

Male

Female

Unspecified/blank

Detainee Numbers

8159

1630

13

Number visited by ICVs

165

43

Age Range of Detainees

10-17

18-25

23-34

35-44

45-54

55-64

65-74

75-84

86-88

Unknown/blank

Detainee Numbers

739

2054

2609

2430

1225

522

168

49

5

1

Findings of Independent Custody Visitors

For each of the visits carried out throughout the year a report was provided to the OPCC detailing what the ICVs had observed or discussed with detainees and custody staff at the time of the visit. ICVs also report back on what they have learned from the custody records where this is appropriate. These reports provide a useful insight into the position in custody and detainee care and enable the Scheme Manager to follow-up any queries or request more information from the relevant PIC Inspector or the Head of Custody. ICVs have been well assisted and supported by custody staff in checking on the rights and entitlements of detainees.

Regular ICVs panel meetings were held throughout the year. These panel meetings enable ICVs to meet to share experiences with other panel members, meet with the PIC Inspectors to discuss their reports and for the Constabulary to advise of action taken in respect of any queries they raised, as well as provide key updates on the local custody position and developments.

ICVs focus on the rights and entitlements of detainees, particularly checking how well detainees are made aware of these and whether they are proactively offered by the police. Overall findings are positive, but it is recognised that detainees may not always understand or remember what they can ask for and therefore needed to be reminded. Staffing levels also impact on what entitlements, such as showers or exercise, can be offered and the timing of this. ICVs are also made aware of any current issues such as delays in the supply of certain foods or clothing and given assurances around actions taken to address those.

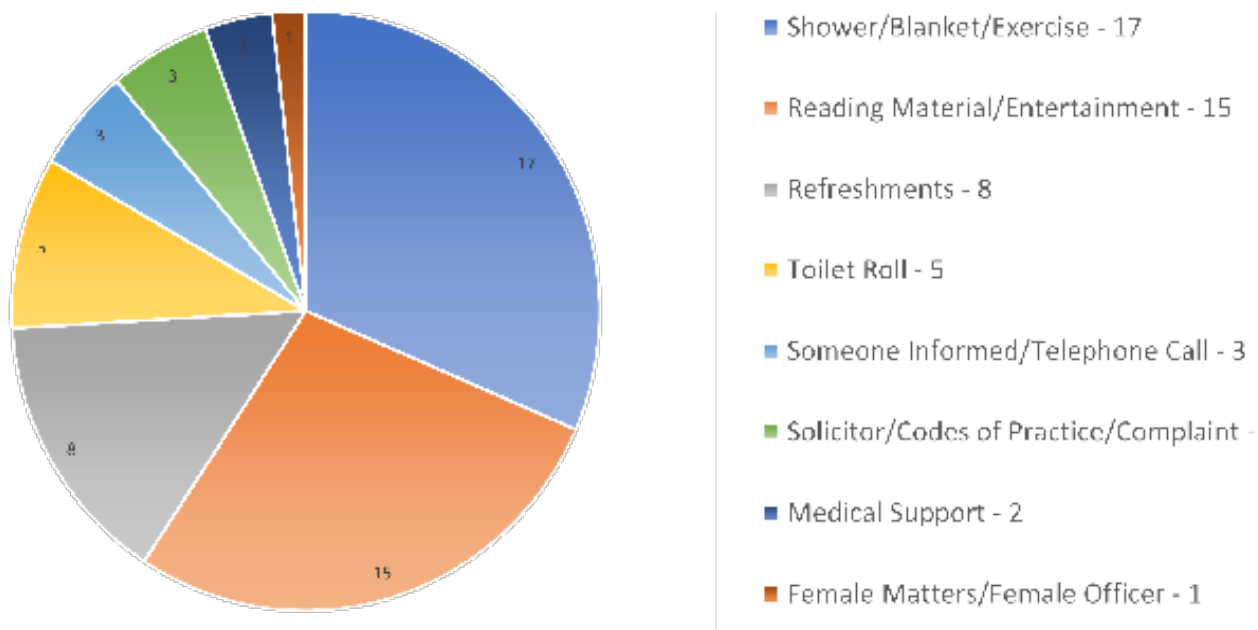
Detainee dignity is another key focus for ICVs and ensuring that the detainees are receiving appropriate care. One example of where ICVs made a difference was when they spoke with a female detainee and established that she was breastfeeding (outside of custody) so required some additional care and attention in custody. This was raised with custody staff, and they were quick to action arrangements to support and comfort the detainee. ICVs have been proactive in checking that female detainees under the age of 18 are cared for by a female officer/member of staff and that all detainees are being asked if they want to speak in private with a member of the custody staff (of the same sex as the detainee if they wish) about any personal needs or concerns that may have whilst they are detained.

In the last year ICVs have also requested more information on the provisions in place for deaf, deafblind, and visually impaired detainees and around access to relevant faith leaders. Discussions are ongoing with the custody team in respect of both topics.

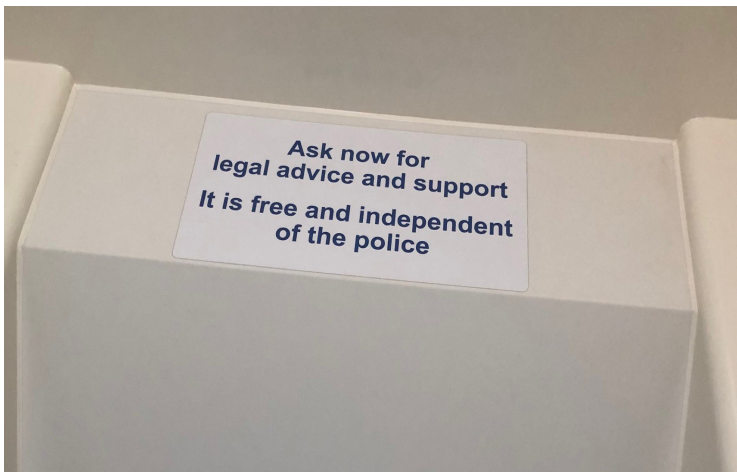
The lack of availability and provision of hospital beds for those held under the Mental Health Act and delays in moving people on from Custody to the correct care remains a concern for ICVs to the extent that a couple ICVs wrote personally to the Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust and the Government Health Secretary in October 2022 to raise their concerns directly. The healthcare and medical provisions within the Police Investigation Centres is also an area of concern which is being closely monitored. The PCC continues to discuss both these matters with the Constabulary at Chief Officer level as well as appropriate partners. ICVs will continue to review and report their observations on these issues, alongside any others that they pick up.

Throughout the year ICVs have regularly commented on the professionalism of staff in dealing with detainees and ICVs. There have also been several very positive comments, particularly about the care of vulnerable detainees, young people, and detainees in custody for the first time. The OPCC is satisfied that any issues raised by ICVs from their visits were considered and addressed.

As a result of their conversations with detainees matters relating to the following areas were raised with custody staff to address.



Part of the role of ICVs is also to check on the conditions of the facilities in which detainees are held. Given the custody facilities in Norfolk and Suffolk were built in 2011 there have been few issues reported by ICVs regarding the facilities. Where issues have been identified either by ICVs or custody staff, such as matters relating to cleaning or issues with the doors in the exercise yards these have been raised with the contractors and action taken to address them, as necessary across all six PICs. ICVs are regularly updated on any changes or developments in terms of technology such as the signage added to cells to encourage detainees to take up legal advice and plans to improve the cell lighting.



There are technological systems in place to enable remote monitoring of detainees and 'in cell' video facilities are being piloted at all six PICs during the 2023/24 period. The virtual court system is no longer being utilised, so detainees are taken to court in person. ICVs have been regularly updated on the changes to the process and the impact, noting where issues have arisen regarding the transfer of detainees both in terms of timings for collections, court cell capacity and detainee demographics in terms of transfer.

Developments During 2022/23

Some of the key developments in custody in 2022/23 were:

The Scheme Managers for Norfolk and Suffolk have worked closely throughout the year given the joint custody function and have met with the Head of Custody, Custody Development Officer, and Lead Custody Trainer on a quarterly basis. These meetings are essential for sharing key issues arising from visits, two-way feedback, custody developments, performance and learning from safer detention, adverse incident reporting or complaints. Alongside this ICV visiting statistics and findings are also shared with the Chief Inspector on a regular basis so that significant or strategic issues can be addressed.

In June 2022 the fourth version of Joint Justice Inspectorate's Expectations for Police Custody report, which set out the inspection criteria for assessing the treatment of and conditions for detainees in police custody, was published. The Head of Custody shared an assessment of the local position against the inspection criteria and outcomes from other forces which is being used to check compliance and drive improvements. He has also updated the OPCC on recent changes to internal scrutiny arrangements.

The OPCC has also been kept up to date with key developments such as the most recent changes in relation to the detention of children and young persons in custody. Children should be booked into custody in a discreet booking in area and where possible held in cells designated for children, away from adult detainees. Work is also ongoing to identify some appropriate decoration for those cells to ensure they are easily identifiable as being different from the rest of custody but remain suitable for any detainee as needed.

The Head of Custody met directly with ICVs at Bury St Edmunds on a visit in February 2023 and with ICVs at Martlesham on 12 June 2023. Plans are being made for the PCC to accompany ICVs on some visits in the 2023/24 period. The PCC will be meeting with the Head of Custody in mid-July for an update on key matters in custody.

Operation Safeguard

Operation Safeguard is a national operation involving police cells being used to temporarily house people remanded by the courts, short term (overnight or over a weekend) due to prisons reaching or exceeding capacity. The operation for the Eastern Region was activated in March 2023. Arrangements were made for cells and staffing at the Wymondham PIC in Norfolk. Norfolk and Suffolk ICVs were updated directly on the Constabularies' plans in a briefing from Superintendent Lou Provar, Joint Justice Command,. No persons were held in Norfolk under this operation, and it was deactivated from 12 May 2023. Should that position change in the future a further update will be provided.

Training Inputs

In October 2022 ICVs from Suffolk and Norfolk were invited to a virtual training and information session supported by the Head of Custody. The session focused on an introduction and update on custody from Chief Inspector Wicks, managing offenders, bail management, out of court disposals and restorative justice, the role of Appropriate Adults and drug testing on Arrest, including Turning Point (Suffolk) and Change, Grow, Live (Norfolk).

The ICV Scheme Managers for Norfolk and Suffolk have provided inputs to custody staff throughout the year, so they understand more about the Scheme and the ICV role.

In March 2023 ICVs were involved in developing an ICV Scheme video for the purposes of custody training.



Criminal Justice Alliance Report - Just Visiting

In December 2021 the Criminal Justice Alliance (CJA) issued its 'Just Visiting' report which explores the effectiveness of independent custody visitors at monitoring race and gender equality in police custody. There were 30 recommendations contained in the report aimed at the Home Office, PCCs, ICVA and HM Inspectorate of Constabulary. One of the recommendations for PCCs was to 'ensure custody visitors are routinely collecting data on detainees' race and gender on their visiting report forms'. The Independent Custody visiting Report Form was updated in April 2022 to better reflect the requirements. Detainee demographic data has been included in the ICV Annual Report at Appendix A, alongside some of the ICV visit data. The OPCC will continue to consider how best to utilise the data collected and keep the other recommendations under review.

Independent Scrutiny

Since 2018, ICVs from Norfolk and Suffolk have been involved in the scrutiny of Strip Search to consider any disproportionality issues. Significant improvements in the quality of the information have been achieved over the period. The role of the panel was expanded in 2020 to include the review of the issue of rip-proof clothing and use of force in custody as well as strip search. In July 2022 a meeting took place with the Independent Custody Visiting Association and representatives from the Dyfed-Powys Police/OPCC to discuss the anti-rip scrutiny that was taking place and share best practice. Several observers from other forces have been interested in the Norfolk and Suffolk Model and attended/plan to attend the meetings to find out more about it. Quarterly scrutiny meetings will continue throughout 2023, with the next meeting to be held on 19 July 2023.

In April 2023 the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) and Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) issued a joint guide they had developed, with input from Ministry of Justice, Independent Custody Visiting Association and Home Office for the Introduction of Custody Detention Scrutiny Panels (CDSPs). The new guidance will be considered in due course with the Constabularies and counterparts in the Norfolk OPCC to review the existing Scrutiny Panel arrangements and consider if any changes are needed to the current model.

Detainees and the Terrorism Act

Anyone arrested under the Terrorism Act (TACT) may be detained for up to 14 days and there are provisions within the PIC estate for anyone arrested locally. An Eastern Region pool of ICVs for visiting TACT detainees is in place. ICVs are selected by the local area, undergo additional vetting and are trained on a regional basis. All ICVs visiting TACT detainees report nationally to the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation (IRTL).

Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA)

Throughout 2022/23 the OPCC has utilised the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) updates and training to keep volunteers engaged and updated. ICVA continues to work proactively with schemes nationally to drive improvements and offer suggestions for key areas of focus, as well as listening to what schemes need from them to support their continued scrutiny work.

An ICVA online Scheme Managers conference took place on 23 November 2022. The event was opened with an update from ICVA on the latest developments in custody. There were three very informative sessions on Transawareness, Anti-Racism and Recruitment and Dignity in Custody: The Menopause. The ICVA National Conference was held in May 2023, resources were shared following the event and circulated to ICVs.

Looking Forward

Training and Recruitment

The OPCC recognises the need to recruit some additional volunteers in the 2023/24 period and to improve the diversity of the panels to better reflect the community of Suffolk. The Scheme Manager will continue to utilise the ICVA training materials as well as provide local training inputs and monthly newsletters.

A Suffolk and Norfolk joint training and information session has been planned for 8 July 2023 to be hosted in person in Suffolk. This will include sessions on Use of Force and Personal Safety Training, Detainee Care in Custody – The Menopause, the Liaison and Diversion Service and an update on Police Custody in Norfolk and Suffolk. Plans for an online session in October 2023 are also in progress.

Working Together

The OPCC will continue to work with the Constabulary over the coming year in response to visit findings and developments in custody. The OPCC will also continue to monitor and support improvements in terms of mental health care (including any progress in respect of the draft Mental Health Bill 2022), local healthcare and medical provisions. Further developments are also expected in terms of in-cell technology, telephone call management, staffing, care of children in custody and information available for people who act as Appropriate Adults in custody.

A Joint Suffolk and Norfolk ICV Panel Co-ordinators meeting with the Head of Custody is planned for September 2023.

Regional Collaboration

The OPCC will continue to meet quarterly with regional colleagues to share developments, learning and best practice. The next ICVA Regional Meeting will take place on 12 September 2023 and a Regional Conference, hosted by the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex will take place on Saturday 21 October 2023.

ICVA Quality Assurance Framework

In 2019 ICVA introduced the ICVA Quality Assurance Framework to help schemes to reflect on how they comply with the Code of Practice, celebrate areas of strength, promote custody visiting and the achievements schemes have made and drive performance and increase sharing of good practice. Suffolk achieved the 'Code Compliant' award in 2019 which demonstrated that the scheme met the statutory requirements and necessary volunteer standards. 'QAF2' was launched in April 2022 and work is ongoing to reflect on the present position which will be reviewed and submitted by the end of September 2023.

Conclusion

Custody Visiting continues to be essential in providing independent scrutiny of the treatment of detained persons and the conditions in which they are held. As well as the mutual level of assurance it offers, the Scheme helps to build partnerships between the police and the communities they serve, and raise public confidence generally.

If you are interested in becoming an Independent Custody Visitor or would like more information please contact:

The Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Manager,
Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk,
Police Headquarters,
Martlesham Heath,
Ipswich
IP5 3QS
Telephone: (01473) 782774 or E-mail: spcc@suffolk.police.uk

For more information on the [role of Independent Custody Visitors](#) and that of the [Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk](#) visit www.suffolk-pcc.gov.uk.

If you require the information in this Annual Report in any other format, please contact us.

Additional Information

The Independent Custody Visiting Association

The [Independent Custody Visiting Association](#) is a Home Office, Policing Authority and Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) funded membership organisation set up to lead, support and represent PCC and Policing Authority led schemes.

Who are the NPM and what is OPCAT?

The [UK National Preventive Mechanism](#) (UKNPM) was established in 2009 to strengthen the protection of people in detention through independent monitoring. In co-ordination across the four nations of the UK, the NPM focuses attention on practices in detention that could amount to ill-treatment and works to ensure its own approaches are consistent with international standards for independent detention monitoring.

The [Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#) (OPCAT) is an international human rights treaty designed to strengthen the protection of people deprived of their liberty. Its adoption by the United Nations General Assembly in 2002 reflected a consensus among the international community that people deprived of their liberty are particularly vulnerable to ill-treatment and that greater efforts were needed to prevent such ill-treatment from happening. OPCAT entered into force in June 2006.





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