



BECOMING AN INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITOR



What is an Independent Custody Visitor?

Independent Custody Visitors are volunteers from the local community who visit police stations unannounced to check on the welfare of people in police custody. They come from a variety of backgrounds and sections of the community. They must be over 18 and have no direct involvement with the criminal justice system, (e.g. serving police officers or special constables). Other people such as solicitors or probation officers may also be excluded to prevent possible conflict of interests for the individual. This maintains the independence of the scheme as a whole.

Selection and Training

Volunteers wishing to become Independent Custody Visitors will need to complete an application form and will be asked to attend an interview.

Successful applicants attend a training session which will cover detainees rights and police responsibilities. This will be organised by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, in partnership with the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA). All volunteers are issued with an official identity card, which they must use when conducting visits to police custody suites.





What Happens During a Custody Visit?

Independent Custody Visitors must maintain their independence and impartiality. They do not take sides but look, listen and report on what they find in the police custody unit. On arrival at the police station, Independent Custody Visitors will be promptly escorted to the custody area. Independent Custody Visitors may occasionally be denied immediate access to the custody suite for safety reasons and asked to wait. Interviews with detainees are, for independent custody visitors' protection, normally carried out within sight, but out of hearing of the escorting officer.

Reporting Procedures

A report is completed after each visit. It provides an insight into the running of the custody area at the time of the visit. Copies of the reports are provided for the Police and the Police and Crime Commissioner. They provide a vital source of information on the environmental and welfare conditions in which detainees are held. The information is analysed and the areas for action are highlighted.

Time Commitment

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner requires Independent Custody Visitors to undertake a minimum of six visits per annum. Visitors are also required to attend any update training as required by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

If you are interested in becoming an Independent Custody Visitor in Cleveland, please contact:

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