



# **Cleveland Independent Custody Visitor Scheme Annual Report – 2022/23**

**Cleveland Independent Custody Visitor Scheme – Annual Report**

Each Police and Crime Commissioner is statutorily required to operate an Independent Custody Visiting Scheme and as such a scheme operates within Cleveland.

## **The Roots of Independent Custody Visiting**

There is a wide variety of events and legislation that underpins the role of Independent Custody Visitors, and into which Independent Custody Visitors input to continually develop policy on the treatment of detainees in Police Custody.

These include:

- **The Civil Disorders of 1981**
- **The Scarman Report of 1981**
- **The Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984.**
- **The European Convention on Human Rights 2000**
- **The Police Reform Act 2002**
- **Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT) 2002:** adopted by the United Nations in 2002, reflecting an international consensus that people deprived of their liberty were particularly vulnerable to ill-treatment. It established a system of regular, independent visits to detention as a preventative safeguard against abuse. The UK established a National Preventive Mechanism (NPM), as required by OPCAT, in 2009. It comprises 21 bodies who independently monitor places of detention. ICVA represents ICVs in the partnership alongside the schemes in Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- **Other Influences:** Police custody is influenced by a range of additional partnerships, reports and bodies that consider police policy and practice. They have ongoing influence on custody visiting and include:
  - The College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice (APP) on Detention and Custody. The APP provides practical, and regularly reviewed, guidance for custody staff on detention and custody. It brings together pre-existing guidance, current legislation and consensus of expert opinion.
  - The Independent Review of Deaths and Serious Incidents in Police Custody, chaired by Dame Elish Angiolini.
  - The PACE Strategy Group – a partnership of stakeholders in police custody for England and Wales such as the National Police Chiefs' Council and the Home Office. ICVA represents custody visiting in this partnership and seeks to raise concerns flagged by ICVs and develop solutions to them.
  - ICVA also works with organisations interested in custody including His Majesty's Inspectorates of Constabulary and Prisons (HMIC/P), INQUEST, and the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) to continually respond and improve our work in custody.

# **This is the Annual Report of the Cleveland Independent Custody Visiting Scheme for the period 1 April 2021– 31 March 2022.**

The report will outline the following information:

1. Introduction to Police Custody in Cleveland
2. Introduction to Cleveland's Scheme
3. Description of the ICV Scheme
4. Training for Custody Visitors
5. The governance of the scheme
6. ICV Scheme Findings
7. Areas of note
8. Future Plans
9. Further information and contact details

## **1. An introduction to police custody in Cleveland**

Cleveland has one main custody suite which is based in Middlesbrough Police Station. There is alternative provision at Hartlepool and Kirkleatham Police Stations which can be opened at a moment's notice if needed.

The main specialist custody support services such as the liaison and diversion team and other referral services such as A Way Out are located in the Middlesbrough suite.

The suite was purpose built as part of the new police station and has recently undergone some refurbishment to include a vulnerability desk, upgraded CCTV and aesthetic enhancements.

## **2. Introduction to Cleveland's Scheme**

*"The custody visitors do a fantastic job on my behalf to ensure detainees in police custody are treated with dignity and respect.*

*"It's so important the public have confidence that the needs of people detained by Cleveland Police are met – particularly those with vulnerabilities and medical requirements.*

*"I would like to take the opportunity during National Volunteers Week to thank them for their service and for assisting my office to hold Cleveland Police's service to account."*

*Police and Crime Commissioner Steve Turner*

## **3. Description of the ICV scheme**

The scheme continued to recover from the effects of the Covid Pandemic which, amongst other things, resulted in changes to the number of custody visitors we had available. Following a successful recruitment campaign in 2022 the new custody visitors began to undertake visits with experienced volunteers and then begin their visits in their new pairs. However, due to other commitments a number of other visitors resigned from the scheme. We are grateful to the remaining custody visitors for filling in and undertaking as many visits as they could.

The custody visitors' rota is arranged to ensure that visits take place on a weekly basis and cover is arranged between the ICVs via a Whats App group which has been set up to assist with arranging visits, however during late 2023 there were times when we were unable to fulfil our weekly visit commitment.

#### **4. Training for Custody Visitors**

In November 2022 we held a joint regional event with our counterparts in Northumbria and Durham. The event, held at Police Headquarters in Durham, focused on race and unconscious bias, with Rebecca Hemmings from Strawberry Words Ltd and Sherry Ralph, Chief Operating Officer, Independent Custody Visitor Association (ICVA), speaking about ICVA's anti racism plans.

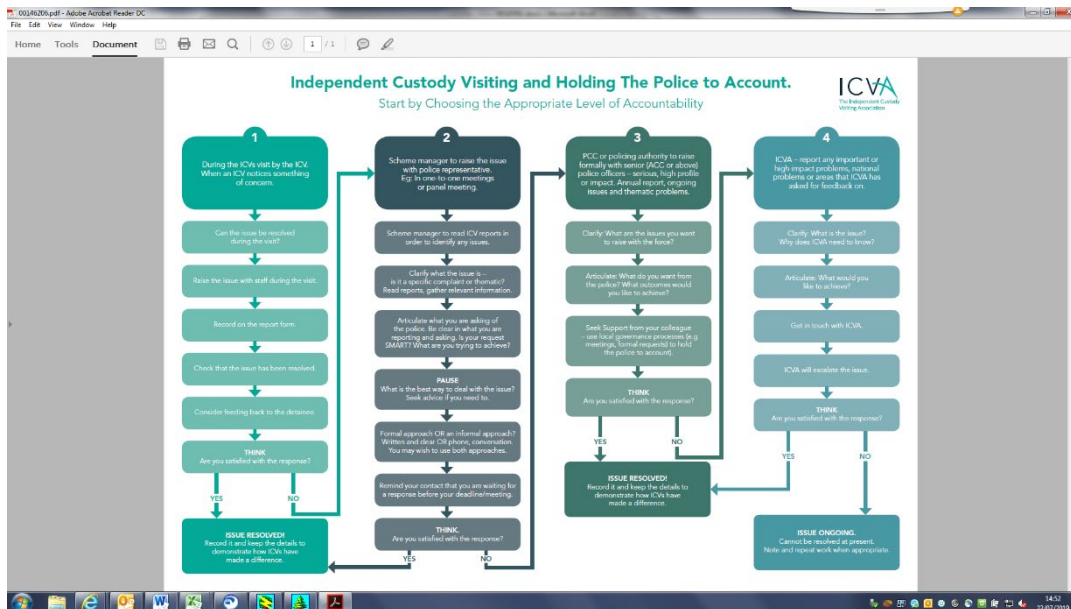


#### **5. The governance of the scheme.**

The scheme adheres to the ICVA 'Holding the Force to Account' schedule which is as follows:

- Smaller issues resolved by staff on duty at the time of visit this is generally issues such as the detainee would like a blanket or they are asking about medication;
- Issues that ICVs could not resolve within the visit and are escalated to the scheme manager to resolve – these issues are collated from the forms or via telephone calls from the custody visitors, all issues are logged and reviewed monthly at the custody contract meetings;
- For any thematic and serious issues then they would be raised by the PCC raises with the Chief Constable or senior staff in the police;
- National themes would be raised through ICVA; and
- Questions and advice can be sought through the ICVA National Expert Forum (NEF) or through the on-line forum for Scheme Managers hosted by the ICVA website.

As part of the new and improved governance arrangements, the findings from the custody visitor forms are brought to the attention of the custody inspector. Generally the issues are of low level and have been dealt with by the visitors whilst in the custody suite; however it is a good way for the force to see what the visitors are picking up and reporting back to the OPCC.



## Panel Meetings

Panel meetings take place with custody visitors where we have a number of standard agenda items to discuss – as follows:

**Custody Issues** – attended by the Custody Management Inspector for the Force  
**For Information** – which includes updated guidance, national issues such as **children** in custody, the use of spit hoods, changes to PACE and any new documentation to assist ICVs such as translation sheets.

**Bitesize Training** – eg Vulnerability Presentation

**ICV Scheme Business** – for example Rota issues, report formats, volunteer agreements etc.

Minutes of panel meetings are taken, actions followed up and any issues raised in visit forms are fed back to the force for action.

In recognition of the importance of running an effective scheme, one of our Business Support Officer now acts as administrator to the scheme on a part time basis. This has provided an additional resource to assist the Scheme Manager and to ensure a more efficient service and liaise with volunteers.

## Quarterly reporting to ICVA

As regional representative, Cleveland requests quarterly reports from the counterparts in Northumbria and Durham. That information is then sent to ICVA to collate data about visits and provide an overview of national issues.

## 6. ICV scheme findings

In summary the good practice highlighted by the custody visitors over the year included

- Cells always clean and tidy.
- Custody staff always efficient, even during busy periods.

- Posters offering language assistance were clearly displayed.

### **How the police respond to your findings**

A member of the custody management team always attends the custody visitor panel meetings. This has provided an excellent opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback. Further work is taking place to ensure that visit feedback is given to the Force; the use of the new national report format is assisting with logging more thorough observations from each visit.

## **7. Areas of note**

The Quality Assurance Framework (or QAF) is a tool that outlines what quality independent custody visiting schemes should look like with a range of levels from Code Compliant to Silver, Gold and then Platinum

The Quality Assurance Framework covers a number of areas:

- Recruiting and training,
- Managing volunteers,
- Communications,
- Holding the force to account,
- Transparency and public reassurance,
- Detainee welfare, and
- Investing in and supporting scheme managers.

*The Quality Assurance Framework has cemented and driven up standards in independent custody visiting. I am incredibly proud of scheme managers, Police and Crime Commissioners, Police Authorities and of course the ICVs who have made it work. It has been a delight to see them strive to achieve their level. It's also been fantastic to see peer schemes work. We came together to define what a great scheme looks like. Scheme managers assessed each other's work through a peer assessment scheme, building new relationships and sharing good practice*  
**Sherry Ralph – Chief Operating Officer, ICVA**

## 8. Future plans

	<b>Previous Action Plan</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>	<b>Completed</b>
1	Develop a website area for ICVs	<b>March 2020</b>	<b>No longer applicable – ICVA website is comprehensive</b>
2	Ensure that the time and date of visits varies to include late evening and early morning visits	<b>Ongoing</b>	
3	Continue with improvements to ensure the scheme receives Gold standards in the Quality Assurance Framework to include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Further evidence of holding the police to account</li> <li>b) Quarterly updates to the PCC</li> <li>c) Increased social media profile</li> <li>d) Share annual report with key stakeholders</li> </ul>	<b>QAF delayed due to effects on schemes during the covid pandemic</b>	<b>Transferred to next Action Plan</b>

### **Action Plan 2023/24**

The actions 2023/24 have been set in order to move the scheme from Silver to Gold as part of the Quality Assurance Framework. The Scheme was assessed as Silver with some areas measuring as Gold but with further work to be done in other areas such as ensuring evidence is available which demonstrates that the reports from custody visitors are used to hold the Force to account.

	<b>Action 2022/23</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>	<b>Completed</b>
1	Ensure all ICVs are vetted and re-vetted where appropriate	April 2023	
2	Ensure data on ethnicity of ICVs is recorded	July 2023	
3	Move to an ongoing recruitment process	September 2023	
4	Work with Cleveland Police to develop and implement a Custody Detention Scrutiny Panel	September 2023	
5	Explanatory notices should be available for detainees, while posters and other publicity material at the places of detention and other public buildings will help to advertise the independent custody visiting system.	September 2023	
6	Continue with improvements to ensure the scheme receives Gold standards in the Quality Assurance Framework to include	September 2023	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Further evidence of holding the police to account</li> <li>b) Quarterly updates to the PCC</li> <li>c) Increased social media profile</li> <li>d) Share annual report with key stakeholders</li> </ul>		
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## 9. Further information and contact details

Contact details for the scheme

Scheme Manager and Member of the ICVA National Expert Forum and ICVA Board Member

**Elise Pout**

Head of Standards, Scrutiny and Accountability  
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Scheme Administrator

Hayley Relph  
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### Other Resources

Details of Cleveland's Independent Custody Visitor scheme can be found on the following webpage

<https://www.cleveland.pcc.police.uk/Take-Part/Independent-Custody-Visiting-Scheme.aspx>

Details of the Independent Custody Visiting Association can be found on the following website

<https://icva.org.uk/>

Details of the National Preventative Mechanism website is as follows.

<https://www.nationalpreventivemechanism.org.uk/>