



# **Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland**

## **Independent Custody Visitor Scheme**

### **Annual Report – 2024 2025**

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## Foreword from the Police and Crime Commissioner

*I am delighted to present our Annual Report for the Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) Scheme in Cleveland. The report covers the period of 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 and provides a summary of the work of our volunteers during this time. The management of an effective scheme remains a statutory function for the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and plays an important role in raising public awareness of the rights, entitlements, health and wellbeing of those individuals detained in police custody.*

*Building trust and confidence in policing is one of my objectives within my Police and Crime Plan. As policing remains under intense public scrutiny, the ICV Scheme is a valuable part of the work of my office to ensure transparency and to hold the Chief Constable to account. ICVs continue to report on well-run custody suites, run by officers who value their visits*

*The wider team and I are incredibly grateful to all our ICVs for their steadfast and continued commitment in this vital role. I would like to thank those of our ICVs who have shown willingness to support the scheme and their colleagues covering visits at all times of the day throughout 2024-2025, ensuring that these very important weekly visits continue to take place.*

*The comprehensive feedback we receive from ICVs is invaluable to my office and senior leaders who use their observations to make improvements on a continual basis. I would like to extend my personal thanks to Cleveland Police and the consistent support that has been offered to the ICV Scheme by everyone who works within the custody suite*

*Our Annual Report highlights some fantastic achievements including achieving silver status in the Independent Custody Visiting Association Quality Assurance Framework and the development of a Custody Detention Scrutiny Panel*

*We look forward to enhancing the scheme throughout 2025 and increasing our volunteer numbers*



*Matt Storey – Cleveland Police and Crime Commissioner*

## Overview of Cleveland Police Custody

Cleveland Police covers a small geographical area of 231 square miles, the district areas are; Middlesbrough, Stockton, Hartlepool and Redcar and Cleveland. The Force serves an increasingly diverse population of almost 570,000 residents. And albeit geographically small, Cleveland Police faces significant challenges with high levels of crime and demand for policing services.

We currently have one dedicated Police Custody Suite located in Middlesbrough, one resilience custody suite in Hartlepool, opened when Middlesbrough is non-operational and/or there is an increase in demand and a custody training suite in Redcar.

Middlesbrough custody suite was purpose built, as part of the new Middlesbrough police station, and recent refurbishment has included a vulnerability desk and upgraded CCTV.

The main specialist custody support services including the Health Care Practitioners, the Liaison and Diversion team and other referral services such as A Way Out are in the Middlesbrough suite.

August 2023 saw the implementation of the Custody Navigators, an initiative funded by the Cleveland Unit for the Reduction of Violence (CURV). The Custody Navigators are the first service in the UK to offer a 'reachable and teachable' support to young people in Police Custody.

Working predominantly with young people **aged 10 to 17 years old** who have been arrested (up to 25 years if they are seen as vulnerable or a looked after child) who are involved in, or at risk of, serious violence. The Navigators provide a multi-agency trauma informed approach, working with the Youth Justice Service's in Cleveland. Funding via CURV has enabled modifications to D wing to provide a 'custody within a custody', with a separate entrance and booking-in desk for young people. The scheme has helped around 800 young people since its launch.

Further information can be found here

[Cleveland custody navigators help hundreds of young people - Cleveland Police and Crime Commissioner](#)



## What is the Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) Scheme?

Each Police and Crime Commissioner is statutorily required to operate an Independent Custody Visiting Scheme and as such a scheme operates within Cleveland. We are supported by The Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA), ensuring we remain up to date with policing reforms, and aiding with our data collection standards, ensuring we collect robust national data to represent the findings of our volunteers.

## 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 premises 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.

## Introduction to Cleveland's ICV Scheme

### Number of ICVs

During 2024/25 the scheme had a maximum of 12 visitors and Kelly our ICV dog/Labrador.



### Cleveland ICV Visits

The custody visits are coordinated via a rota system, and weekly visits are planned.

Visits are unannounced, they are always conducted in pairs and take place at varying times of the day and week, ensuring a wide range of detainees are visited.

ICVs check on the check on the rights, entitlements, wellbeing, and dignity of detainees held in police custody and inspect cells and custody facilities. These findings are reported to PCC who can hold the Chief Constable to account for performance in this area.

### Scheme Governance – Holding the Force to Account

After each visit, ICVs complete a report detailing their findings, this report is submitted to the ICV Scheme Manager and shared with the Custody Inspector.

If a visit discloses an issue, the scheme adheres to the ICVA 'Holding the Force to Account schedule':

- Smaller issues are 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.

- 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.

In Cleveland, generally issues have been of low level and consequently resolved by the visitors directly, whilst in the custody suite.

### **Independent Custody Visitor Panel Meetings**

The Scheme Manager meets with the ICV 'Panel' of volunteers and the respective Custody lead, to discuss a wide range of issues, from updates from the Custody Inspector to bite size training from the Independent Custody Visitor Association. Minutes of panel meetings are taken, actions followed up and any issues raised in visit forms are fed back to the force for action.

To ensure effective and efficient coordination administration support is provided by the OPCC Business Support team.

### **Independent Custody Visiting Quarterly reporting to ICVA**

Information is sent to ICVA on a quarterly basis to collate data about visits and contribute to ICVA's National Expert Forum which is helpful for learning and sharing good (and bad) practice.

### **Equality and Diversity**

Cleveland's Independent Custody Visiting Scheme is firmly committed to equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). Through an ongoing recruitment process, we actively seek individuals from diverse backgrounds to serve as custody visitors, ensuring that the voices and perspectives of the local community are represented. Suggestions are warmly welcomed to enhance our uptake, to enable greater alignment with the community's demographics.

### **Training for Custody Visitors**

We place a strong emphasis on training and are dedicated to embracing further the resources available to the ICV scheme and our valued visitors. To ensure they have the necessary knowledge and skills to complete their visits effectively and safely and therefore enhancing the quality and integrity of the ICV in Cleveland.

Via the ICVA dedicated training resource page, ICVs can complete bitesize training modules whilst at home this training has included the following:

ICVA Arrivals and Booking in Process  
ICVA PACE Detention Clock Bitesize  
ICVA Reviews Observations Rousals  
ICVA Rights and Entitlement Police Perspective  
ICVA Rights and Entitlements to Conversations with a Solicitor  
ICVA Menopause Awareness for ICVs

ICVs have also received the following ICVA briefings:

ICVA Introductions of ICVs to Detainees  
ICVA Custody Staff Handovers  
ICVA Detainee Known to ICV  
ICVA Advised Not to See  
ICVA Confidentiality of Visits  
ICVA County Lines

## **Custody Detention Scrutiny Panel**

Policing was asked to consider the introduction of review Panels which would identify both good and poor systemic, cultural, and adopted practices that impact on detainees whilst in police care.

Over recent years, several independent reviews such as the 'Lammy Review,' 'Angiolini Review' and the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (CRED) had identified issues of disparity and inequality in the Criminal Justice System which has led to a trust deficit between communities and the police.

Of the four overarching aims of the CRED, the first is to "build trust between different communities and institutions that serve them."

The Scheme Manager and the Custody Inspector worked to develop the panel in Cleveland with the first meeting taking place in January 2024.

The primary objective of the Custody Detention Scrutiny Panel is to independently:

- assess and report on detention and custody processes, including compliance with Authorised Professional Practice (APP);
- review and advise on matters of disproportionality in the application of police powers;
- to act as a constructive friend to the Constabulary and provide advice and guidance to improve its performance around strip search; and
- assist in generating a transparent product suitable for public consideration at the end of each annual Panel cycle.

The first panel took place on 25 January 2024 and considered the appropriate use of strip searches in custody. The panel on 29 April considered 'near misses' – why they had taken place and how they had been handled and recorded.

Custody visitors were also involved in the development of the panel and volunteered to attend the first two meetings to provide their input. Going into 2025/2026 the panel has been expanded to include key stakeholders including the Youth Justice Service, Appropriate Adult Service and the Custody Navigators.

## Cleveland Independent Custody Visitors – 2024/25 Performance

### Total Number of Visits (where a form has been received)

Number of Visits	
Quarter 1	13
Quarter 2	9
Quarter 3	9
Quarter 4	8
	39

Due to a number of visitors who left the scheme, visit numbers dropped with existing visitors having to do additional visits. A planned recruitment drive for 2025-26 will ensure that more visits will be able to take place.

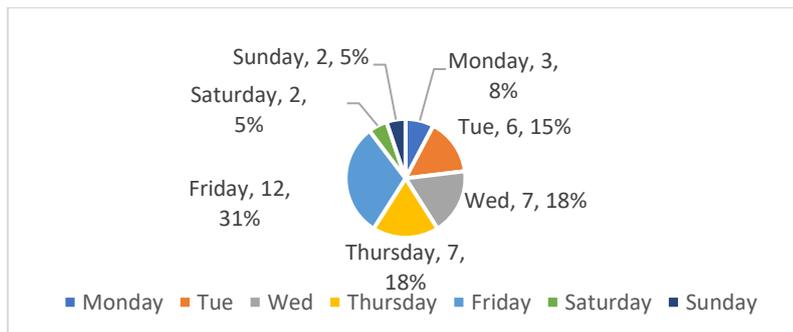
### Numbers of Detainees Visited

Number of detainees in custody							
	total in custody	offered	Offered Percent	accepted	Accepted Percent	visited/observed	offered/visited as a % of numbers in custody
Quarter 1	316	68	22%	61	90%	74	23%
Quarter 2	163	31	19%	25	81%	36	23%
Quarter 3	212	43	20%	39	91%	60	28%
Quarter 4	179	37	21%	30	82%	33	18%
	870	179	21%	155	86%	203	23%

It can be seen that 86% of those offered a visited accepted, with ICVs seeing 23% of those people detained in custody.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
		2	3	2	5	1	0
1		2	0	2	4	0	0
2		1	2	0	2	0	2
		1	2	3	1	1	0
3		6	7	7	12	2	2

The most popular day for a visit is Friday, the numbers above have been discussed with the ICVs to enable them to take this into account when planning their visits for 2025-26.



Times of Visits - where stated	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
0000-0600	0	0	0	0
0600-1200	2	2	3	2
1200-1800	11	6	5	6
1800-0000	0	0	0	0

Again, visit times have been discussed with ICVs, with a commitment to undertake some early morning and late evening visits

Wait Times	
Quarter 1	6 mins
Quarter 2	7.3 mins
Quarter 3	8.2 mins
Quarter 4	7 mins

average 7.1 mins

### Custody Numbers

Total Arrested – 2022-23 16,267  
2023-24 17,176  
2024-25 17,066

## **Visits: Summary of Findings**

### **ICV Scheme Findings**

ICVs consistently report nominal waiting times, with accommodating and courteous custody staff. The overall findings are positive, with cells maintained to a good standard of cleanliness, and issues such as requests for blankets swiftly resolved. ICVs have also noted, this level of service is upheld even during peak periods.

ICVs check that detainees have received any necessary medication and have not reported any delays in this area.

Stock rooms are well stocked and tidy, an issue with low stock of blankets was reported and dealt with.

### **How does the Force Respond to the ICVs findings**

We adopt proactive communication between the Scheme Manager and the Custody Inspector, and a member of the Custody Management Team always attends the custody visitor panel meetings. These panels provide an excellent opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback. By adopting the national report format to record the ICV feedback this has ensured detailed observations can be recorded from each visit.

## Priorities for Cleveland's ICV Scheme 2024-25

The actions set for 2023/24 were set to advance the scheme from Silver to Gold as part of the Quality Assurance Framework.

We would like to express gratitude to our ICVs, whose support during a challenging period has been invaluable. Despite operating with depleted numbers, they have demonstrated unwavering commitment to upholding the integrity and standards of the Cleveland Independent Custody Visiting Scheme. Their perseverance and dedication are truly commendable.

The scheme now not only has greater resource resilience and additional recruitment presents an exciting opportunity for development of the ICV scheme and a gold standard status.

	<b>Action 2023/24 – 2024/25</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>	<b>Complete</b>
1	Ensure all ICVs are vetted and re-vetted where appropriate	April 2023	Complete
2	Ensure data on ethnicity of ICVs is recorded	July 2023	Complete
3	Move to an ongoing recruitment process	Sept 2023	Complete
4	Work with Cleveland Police to develop and implement a Custody Detention Scrutiny Panel	Sept 2023	Complete

	<b>Action 2025/26</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>	<b>Complete</b>
1	Move from paper reports to electronic	May 2025	
2	Continue with improvements to ensure the scheme receives 'Gold' standard in the Quality Assurance Framework to include	September 2024	Extended March 2026
	a) Quarterly updates to the PCC		
	b) Increased social media profile		
	c) Share annual report with key stakeholders		
	d) Further evidence of holding the police to account – scheme manager to attend custody meetings		
	e) Implement ICV training tracker		
	f) Annual Welfare Check Ins in place		
	g) Local ICV Survey in Place		
	h) ICVs have completed anti racism training		
	i) PCC to accompany ICVs on a visit		
	j) ICVs to vary times of visits to include early morning and late evening visits.		

## Further Information about Custody Visiting



Further information about the ICV Scheme can be viewed through the following link: [Home Page of ICVA \(The Independent Custody Visitors Association\)](#)

ICVA is a Home Office, Police Authority and PCC funded membership organisation set up to lead, support and represent PCC and Police Authority-led schemes.



Details of the National Preventative Mechanism website is as follows.

[About – National Preventive Mechanism](#)



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

[Independent Custody Visitors Scheme - Cleveland Police and Crime Commissioner](#)

## Get in Touch

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

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If you would like more information about becoming an Independent Custody Visitor in Cleveland, or for general information regarding the scheme, please use the contact details below