



INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITOR SCHEME ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26



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Foreword from the Police and Crime Commissioner



I am pleased to present our Annual Report for the Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) Scheme in Cleveland, covering 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. The scheme remains a statutory duty of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and plays an essential role in promoting public awareness of the rights, entitlements, health and wellbeing of people detained in police custody.

Building trust and confidence in policing is a core priority in my Police and Crime Plan. At a time of continued public scrutiny, the ICV Scheme provides vital transparency and supports my responsibility to hold the Chief Constable to account. ICVs consistently report well-run custody suites and officers who value their visits. I attended a custody visit in March to see for myself how the ICVs undertake a visit and to observe how they check detainees welfare, rights and conditions, especially young people and those with vulnerabilities.

We are extremely grateful to all our volunteers for their dedication and professionalism, particularly those who have supported visits at all hours to ensure weekly checks have continued throughout 2025–2026.

The feedback provided by ICVs is invaluable and helps drive continuous improvement. I would also like to thank Cleveland Police for their ongoing support and professionalism within custody.

This year's report highlights key achievements, including moving from silver to gold status in the Independent Custody Visiting Association's Quality Assurance Framework.

Matt Storey
Police and Crime Commissioner

Overview of Cleveland police Custody

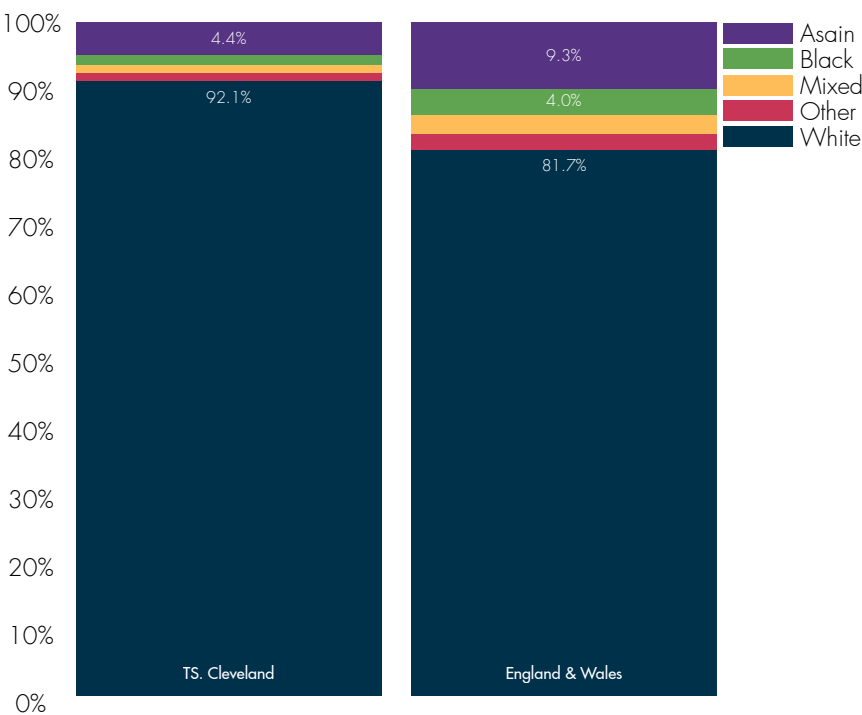
The Cleveland Police Force covers a small geographical area of 231 square miles, the district areas are; Middlesbrough, Stockton, Hartlepool and Redcar and Cleveland. The Force serves an increasingly diverse population of almost 640,000 residents. And albeit geographically small, it has a largely urban geography with high levels of deprivation and significant social and economic pressures. As a result, Cleveland Police face significant challenges with high levels of crime and demand for policing services.

Cleveland population statistics

In 2024, there were 64k residents in Cleveland postcode area with an average age of 41.4 years. Population density was 633 residents per square kilometer. Population grew by 8.2% since 2002 and population average age increased by 3 years in the same period.

Population Estimates	Value in 2024
Total residents	645k
Average age	41.4
Population density	633

Cleveland population ethnic group



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 there is 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. The provision of Detention Officers was brought back in house in 2025, having previously been provided by a contracted service.

The Custody Navigators programme, an initiative funded by the Cleveland Unit for the Reduction of Violence (CURV), remained in place. 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 custody' with a separate entrance and booking-in desk for young people.

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 2025/26 the scheme had a maximum of 8 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.

The Scheme Manager also attends the Force's Custody Governance Group and can raise any issues and share positive feedback.

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.

In 2025 ICVA launched a first-class online training portal for ICVs which covers all you ever wanted to know about custody, providing a consistent and up to date training offer for all our volunteers.

Independent Custody Visitor Panel Meetings

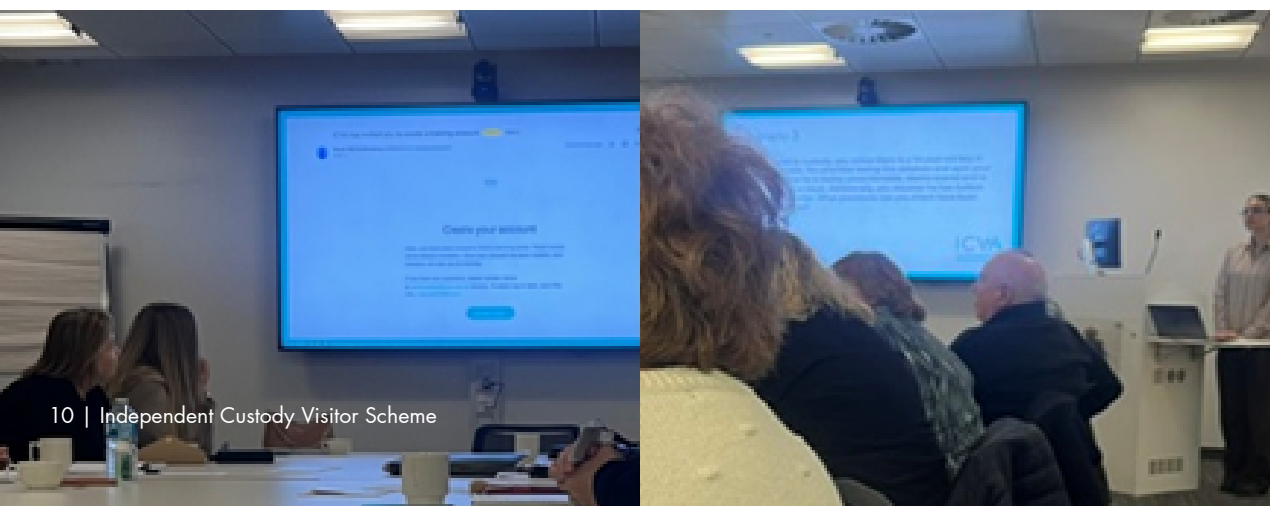
The Scheme Manager meets with the ICV 'Panel' of volunteers and the respective Custody lead, to discuss a wide range of issues, from updates from the Custody Inspector to bite size training from the Independent Custody Visitor Association. Minutes of panel meetings are taken, actions followed up and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

Date of Meeting	Topic Considered
02-Apr 2025	Custody Update – Custody Chief Inspector
	Operation Safeguard
	HMICFRS Changes
	Menopause in Custody
	Custody Detention Scrutiny Panel update
	ICV Support and Feedback
03-Jun 2025	Custody Update – Custody Chief Inspector
	Operation Whitebeam - updates to custody contract
	Custody Detention Scrutiny Panel update
	Information on Speaking to Individuals with Mental Health issues
06-Oct 2025	Custody Update – Custody Chief Inspector
	Near Misses
	Independent Custody Visitor Association Annual Report
	Cleveland ICV Annual Report 2024/25
	Anti Racism Policy
	ICV Support and Feedback (inc ICV Survey)
15-Jan 2025	Custody Update – Custody Chief Inspector
	Information and Resources - Regional Conference
	ICVA - E Learning Platform
	ICV Support and Feedback

Annual Regional Conference

Our volunteers had the opportunity to meeting with their ICV counterparts from across the regional at a regional conference kindly hosted by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner in Durham in February 2026. Learning took place about Children in Custody and the ICVA Learning portal.



ICVA – Quality Assurance Framework (QAF)

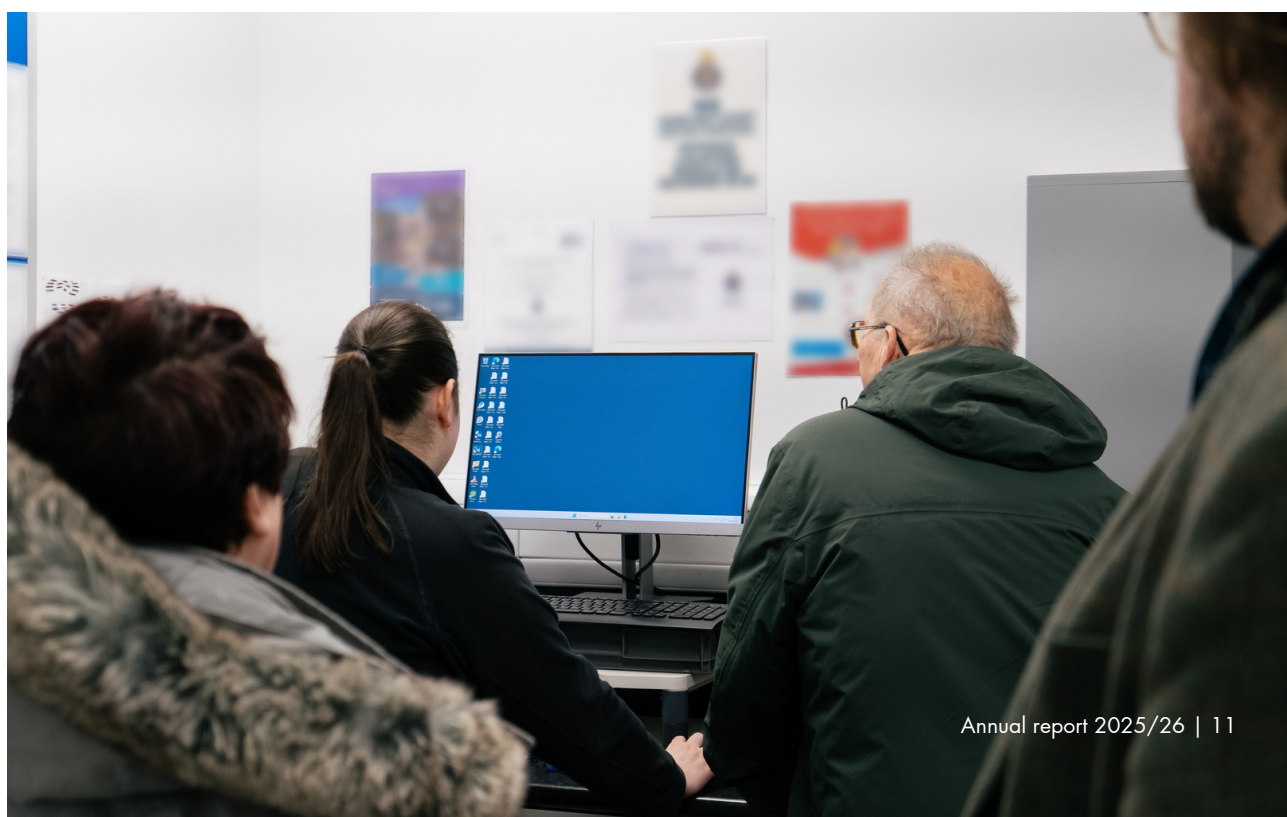
The QAF framework has been designed for the locally run schemes to help to:

- Reflect on how they comply with the Code of Practice, the legislation that underpins custody visiting.
- Celebrate areas of strength.
- Promote custody visiting and the achievements they have made.
- Drive up performance of schemes.
- Increase sharing of good practice and resources across schemes.

Every other year ICV Schemes undertake an assessment of their schemes against a number of standards contained within the QAF to receive the following outcomes

- Code Compliant – Schemes meet the statutory requirements of the Code of Practice.
- Silver – Schemes have a good standard of custody visiting.
- Gold – Schemes have an excellent standard of custody visiting.
- Platinum – Schemes have an outstanding standard of custody visiting

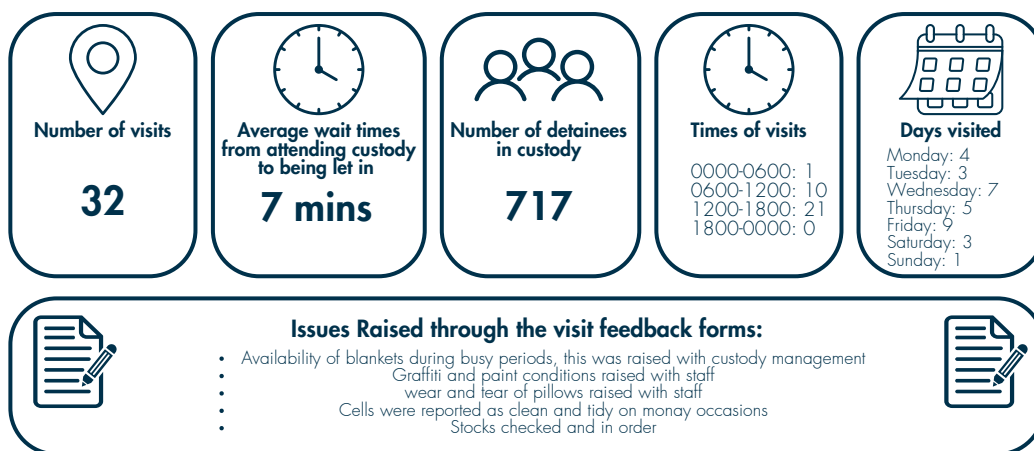
In 2019 and 2023 Cleveland reached Silver. In 2026 the Cleveland scheme was successful in achieving the Gold standard.



Cleveland Independent Custody Visitors – 2025/26 Performance

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

Due to a number of visitors who left the scheme, visit numbers dropped with existing visitors having to do additional visits.

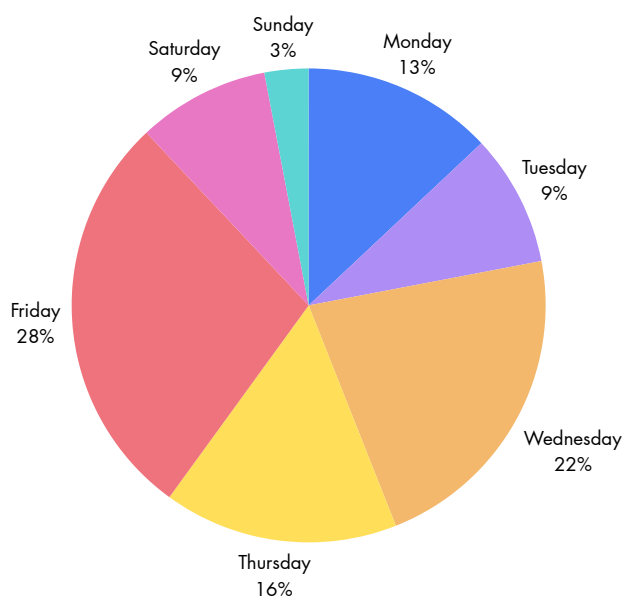


Numbers of Detainees Visited

It can be seen that on average 26%, (up from 21% last year) of detainees were offered a visit, with 71% of those offered accepting (down from 86% last year), with ICVs seeing 22% of those people detained in custody, 1% less than last year.

	Total in custody	Total in custody at time of visit	No of visits	Offered a visit	Percentage offered a visit	Accepted	Accepted percentage	Visited/ observed	Offered/visited as a percentage of people in custody
Quarter 1	3698	159	8	51	32%	29	57%	35	22%
Quarter 2	3817	143	8	44	31%	33	75%	42	29%
Quarter 3	4027	187	7	28	15%	24	86%	29	16%
Quarter 4	4445	228	9	62	27%	40	65%	45	20%
Average	15987	717	32	46.25	26%	31.5	71%	37.75	22%

The most popular day for a visit is Friday, the same as it was in 2025-2025. The numbers above have been discussed with the ICVs to enable them to take this into account when planning their visits for 2026-27.



Frequency Visits

Time of visits - where stated	Frequency
0000-0600	1
0600-1200	10
1200-1800	21
1800-0000	0

The most visited time was afternoons between 1200 and 1800. This is a similar position to 2024-2025 and visit times have been discussed with ICVs, with a commitment to undertake some early morning and late evening visits

Wait Times

Wait Times	
Quarter 1	6 mins
Quarter 2	6 mins
Quarter 3	8 mins
Quarter 4	9 mins

Custody numbers

Year	Total Arrested
2022-23	16,267
2023-24	17,176
2024-25	17,066
2025-26	15,987

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.

Stocks of female products were checked after a concern from an ICV and found to be in place.

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.

The ICV Scheme Manager is also invited to the Force's Custody Governance Group which is attended by senior Cleveland Police staff and officers who have custody within their portfolio. Any areas of good practice or concern can be raised in that forum. Demonstrating the commitment the Force has to receiving external scrutiny.

Priorities for Cleveland's ICV Scheme 2025-2026

The actions set for 2025/2026 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.

	Action 2025/26	Completion Date	Complete
1	Move from paper reports to electronic This was unachievable due to issues with technology and wi-fi in the custody suite.	May 2025	Moved to 2026-2027
2	Continue with improvements to ensure the scheme receives 'Gold' standard in the Quality Assurance Framework to include	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.		

	Action 2026/2027	Completion Date	Complete
1	Move from paper reports to electronic recording	March 2027	
2	Recruit additional volunteers for the scheme	September 2026	

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

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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 get in touch.





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