

# 2022-2023 Annual Report

## Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs)

### Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner's Office



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# Foreword from the Avon & Somerset Police & Crime Commissioner

I am delighted to present our Annual Report for the Independent Custody Visting (ICV) Scheme in Avon and Somerset.

The report covers the period of 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 and provides a summary of the work undertaken and the achievements made by the ICV Scheme in Avon and Somerset.

The management of an effective scheme remains a statutory function for the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and serves to raise public awareness of the rights, entitlements, health and wellbeing of those individuals detained in police Custody. The scheme also ensures that any issues relating to individuals and/or the Custody environment can be addressed as appropriate by an effective working relationship between the OPCC and the Constabulary.

I am pleased to report that our local police Custody units in Bridgwater, Patchway and Keynsham are running efficiently and effectively and this is despite Custody staff facing resourcing difficulties over the last year. The service provided by other professionals in Custody including Health Care Professionals (HCPs) and Advice and Support in Custody and Court ASCC; for those with mental health needs, remains of a high standard. However, it is apparent that the services of HCPs in particular have been stretched and that ongoing recruitment is needed.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to our ICVs for their unwavering dedication and hard work in their role. Despite reduced ICV numbers, the frequency of visits has not been compromised and this is down to the tireless efforts and superb teamwork of our ICVs. I am incredibly grateful to all our ICVs for their steadfast and continued commitment in this vital role. The impact of your work extends beyond the immediate duties you perform – it contributes significantly to building trust between our communities and the police.

I would like to extend my personal thanks to Avon and Somerset Constabulary and the

consistent support that has been offered to the ICV Scheme by the respective leads in each Custody Unit. Thank you also in particular to Chief Inspector Will Barlow Head of Custody for his oversight and to Chief Inspector Nick Evans for his support during the latter part of the financial year, providing interim cover when required.

Lastly I would like to thank Rebecca Maye, ICV Scheme Manager. Rebecca took over the management of the Scheme in October 2022 with enthusiasm and professionalism following the departure of her predecessor Kathryn Palmer who aptly ran the Scheme since its inception.

Looking ahead, the ICV Scheme is currently working towards securing a national accreditation through the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) that will be awarded by the Independent Custody Visitor Association (ICVA) in September 2023. We have recently recruited a small number of new ICVs and hope be able to increase our numbers further in the near future.



**Mark Shelford**  
**Avon and Somerset Police & Crime**  
**Commissioner**

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be "M Shelford". The signature is written in a cursive style and is enclosed within a simple, hand-drawn oval shape.

## Foreword from the Avon & Somerset Police Acting Head of Custody

It's been another busy year in our three custody units and a challenging year with staffing particularly over the summer months when demand is always higher.

I have been providing some interim cover as acting Head of Custody.

Operation Safeguard was initiated which was a country wide operation to support His majesties prisons with their increased population, Avon & Somerset provided 6 cells to support this.

We welcomed a new cohort of Sergeants and Detention Officers to support those looking to move on.

I want to thank all the ICV's for all their hard work and dedication, you provide some clarity and independence in custody which can only go to improve the service we offer and improve detainee welfare.

Thank you all and look forward to continuing to work with you in 2023.

**Chief Inspector Nicholas Evans**  
**Acting Head of Custody**

## Introduction

The Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act placed a statutory obligation on all PCCs in England and Wales to have in place an effective ICV Scheme in their police force area.

The primary purpose of the Scheme is to provide independent scrutiny of Avon and Somerset Police to ensure that those detained in Custody are being treated fairly and in accordance with Code C of the 1984 Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE). The Act can be viewed in full through the following link:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/13/contents/enacted>

The PCC has an ICV Scheme Manager who is responsible for organising and overseeing the delivery of Custody visiting arrangements in Avon and Somerset. The ICV Scheme has been written in conjunction with the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) 'National Standards on Independent Custody Visiting' and the Home Office's 'Code of Practice on Independent Custody Visiting.' These arrangements are kept under review on a four yearly basis and are revised, as necessary. The ICVs are supported in their role through a combination of regular contact with the office, meetings, online forums and training sessions.

The PCC provides regular updates to the Police and Crime Panel, a statutory joint partnership that supports and scrutinises the decisions and activities of the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioners.

## The Avon and Somerset ICV Scheme

The Custody Visiting Scheme is currently organised into three panels aligned with the three designated Custody units in the Avon and Somerset Constabulary area: Patchway Police Centre, Keynsham Police Centre and Bridgwater Police Centre. ICVs are allocated upon appointment to a specific panel.

Unannounced visits are made at least once per week to the three designated Custody units. All the Custody centres are active and open for 24 hours a day, all year round.

| PFI Custody Centres | No. of Cells |
|---------------------|--------------|
| Bridgwater          | 36           |
| Keynsham            | 48           |
| Patchway            | 48           |

Each of the three sites have 4 vulnerable cells which have a full length window in the door as opposed to a smaller hatch on a normal cell door. These cells are usually reserved for juveniles and vulnerable individuals. Avon and Somerset police are putting a proposal forward to increase the number of vulnerable cells as demand is currently outstripping the capacity they have.

After each ICV visit, ICVs complete a report of their finding using the Avon and Somerset Custody App and submit this report to the Scheme Manager. This report can also be reviewed by the police Custody lead.

During their visits, the ICVs will inspect a number of different areas including:

- cells and toilets have been maintained.
- CCTV is present and working.
- reasonable temperatures are maintained within the cells and centre.
- any medical attention or medication required has been provided.
- any detainee visible injuries have been explained.
- female detainee hygiene concerns are addressed.
- washing facilities and access to fresh clothing have been provided.
- the food preparation areas and bedding are in a clean, tidy and hygienic condition.
- religious materials are stored appropriately.
- the detainee is satisfied with their treatment in Custody.
- a reasonable period of time to rest has been given, if detained overnight.
- with the consent of the detainee, ICVs check the Custody log to ratify the detainee's account of their detention.

If a visit discloses any aspect of the treatment of detainees or conditions at the Custody unit which are unsatisfactory then the issue is recorded on the report and raised with the Custody Sergeant at the time. Any action taken by the Custody Sergeant (or Escorting Officer) should also be recorded on the report by the ICVs and the issue marked as resolved. If ICVs are not satisfied that the issue has been resolved, they may ask to speak to the Duty Inspector about their concerns.

Unresolved issues or those requiring a response from the PCC are brought to the attention of the ICV Scheme Manager. Feedback is provided to ICVs regarding any comments they raise following discussions with the Custody Inspector or, in more serious instances, following discussions with the Head of Custody.

## **ICV Scheme composition**

The ICV Scheme in Avon and Somerset currently has 19 Custody visiting volunteers. These comprise of 11 female visitors and 9 male visitors – spanning a range of different ages and backgrounds.

The Scheme Manager meets with each ICV Panel and the respective police Custody lead each quarter to discuss issues reported, emerging trends, risks, initiatives, statistics and general updates. Training material is circulated throughout the year and the PCC seeks to hold an annual Volunteers Celebration Event.



*PCC's Volunteer Celebration Event, Avon & Somerset Police & Fire Headquarters, Portishead, 14<sup>th</sup> April 2022*

## **OPCC Recruitment Campaign**

The OPCC launched a Recruitment Campaign for a series of volunteer roles at the end of 2022. This included the recruitment of ICVs, as the Scheme seeks to expand and increase diversity of panels.

Five ICVs have been successfully appointed and are in the process of being vetted.

Whilst the Recruitment Campaign was successful in recruiting sufficient numbers for the PCC's Scrutiny Panels it did not yield the desired number of ICVs for the Scheme. Therefore a targeted recruitment, aimed purely at recruiting ICVs is anticipated to be launched at the end of 2023.

## **OPCC Review**

In June 2022 the PCC commissioned a Review of the OPCC and changes were made to the OPCC structure and roles to realign the office with the demands and priorities of the PCC.

Four directorates were formed and the ICV Scheme is managed within the Performance and Accountability Directorate. All job titles have changed and two Scrutiny and Assurance Manager positions have been created and within these roles sit the ICV Scheme Manager. It is envisaged in the future that the ICV Scheme will be jointly managed by both Scrutiny & Assurance Managers to ensure resilience within the Directorate and a greater support for the Scheme and ICVs.

## Statistical analysis

A total of 17,720 individuals were detained across the three Custody centres in Avon and Somerset throughout 2022/2023. The following demand was recorded across each of the Custody centres:

| PFI Custody Centres | Detainees | Percentage |
|---------------------|-----------|------------|
| Bridgwater          | 6265      | 35.4       |
| Patchway            | 6093      | 34.4       |
| Keynsham            | 5362      | 30.3       |

Of those individuals detained:

- 83.8% identified as male, 15.9% as female, 0.3% as unknown.
- 29% were between 18-30 years old, with 18.1% between 10 and 17 years old. The remaining 1.5% were aged between 31-60 years old and 0.1% were aged 61 years and over.
- 77.9% self-defined their ethnicity as white, 5.9% as black, 2.8% as Asian, 3.6% as mixed race, and 2.1% as other ethnicity. The remaining 7.8% of detainees did not declare their ethnicity.

A total of Quarterly statistics are sent by the PCC's office to the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) for national collation. A total of 136 ICV visits were undertaken during 2022/23. The frequency of visiting is 1 visit every 7 days at each of the 3 Custody Units. All visits were physical inspections compared to the previous financial year, where visits comprised a combination of physical and remote visits to prevent the further spread of Covid-19.

| DPs through Custody 2022-2023 | Total ICV visits | Total DPs at ICV visits | Total no. DPs visited |
|-------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Apr-Jun: 4,498                | 38               | 336                     | 137                   |
| Jul-Sep: 4,463                | 34               | 381                     | 120                   |
| Oct-Dec: 5,877                | 32               | 267                     | 126                   |
| Jan-Mar: 4,530                | 32               | 300                     | 127                   |
| <b>Totals:</b>                | <b>136</b>       | <b>1,284</b>            | <b>510</b>            |

## Visits: Summary of findings

Most of the issues raised by ICVs are dealt with promptly at the time of the visit. By their very nature, they tend to be low-level issues relating to a detainee's comfort and general level of satisfaction.

Many ICV Visit reports include praise and compliments to the Custody staff, that there are no issues or problems and that all is as expected, to a high standard. Also, Custody kitchen cleanliness, ready meals in date-order, showers and sink area cleanliness, exercise yards clean and religious material neat and respectfully stored.

### **Examples of good practice from forces**

- Warrant-related arrested people are now taken directly to court not Custody. This is more beneficial for the detainee and relieves pressure on Custody units.
- Catering supplies - new NPCC Bidfood contract for meals/catering supplies to provide a longer-term solution to previous food and drink shortages issue and Custody Staff buying catering from local supermarkets. Additionally squash now offered to detainees.
- Wider range of religious material is being considered, in addition to bibles, Qurans and prayer mats. For example Torah, Tipitaka and Guru Granth Sahib for other religious groups, with local Religious Leaders as contacts.
- Sleeping reviews: ICVs review Custody Records and welcome the recording of update to Detainees asap when the Detainee is awake. A Niche system update has been suggested for Custody Staff.
- All cells painted in calming neutral tones across all Custody suites.
- New bail introduced – Custody Sergeants can now bail a detainee which will speed the process up and reduce time in Custody for detainees.
- Shelving now available across all suites to accommodate reading materials.

### **Causes for ICV concern:**

- Several abandoned ICV visits took place across the financial year due to resourcing pressures in police Custody.
- External agencies – one main cause for concern was that of access to healthcare professionals in Custody since the new provider MITIE took over the contract in October 2022. ICVs continue to feedback to ICV Scheme managers when a HCP is not on site. Similarly, SERCO low staffing causing delays in transporting detainees to court or prison.

### **Examples of where ICVs have affected change**

- Painting of Exercise yards and suitable footballs being issued.
- Solicitors have been requesting Detention Officers to print Custody Records. This is costly and time consuming and ICVs raised this with the PCC's CFO and Head of Custody, to suggest alternative ways of working, such as Solicitors printing their own accessible copies or secure electronic copies provided to the Legal Service providers.
- ICVs are recording a 'Offer Culture' rather than a 'Request Culture' in Custody. This is something that is regularly raised by ICVs in their Visit Report and Panel meetings, especially around access to Healthcare Practitioners (HCPs). ICVs witness DOs taking positive steps to offer HCP visits to Detainees.



## Comments from Panel Coordinators

*The year started reasonably normal, with no Covid restrictions and visits every 7 days, with a Panel of 11 ICVs. The Team managed to carry out the required number of visits throughout the year, with only 2 visits being aborted, due to an extremely difficult number of detainees needing attention from a very stretched Custody staff.*

*Our visits highlight a very high number of detainees with Mental Health issues, requiring attention from Custody staff, Health Care Professionals and ASCC, the cleaning staff who deep clean the cells when required, including at required times, Police Officers drafted in for constant close proximity observation outside of the open cell door to prevent the detained person self-harming and help preventing a death in custody.*

*A digital custody app report is written by the 2 ICVs pairing after the completion of the visit and submitted to the OPCC and Custody Inspector, any unresolved issues that are not resolved before the completion of the visit are then followed up and addressed.*

*Unfortunately, the Keynsham Panel had 4 ICVs step down over this period, 2 with 3 years volunteering, 1 with 6 years volunteering and 1 completing 9 years volunteering, all reluctantly leaving the ICV scheme through personal circumstances, leaving a team of 7 committed ICVs, who are coping extremely well as "Critical Friends" to the very friendly and professional custody staff.*

*The good news is, an OPCC volunteer ICV recruitment campaign is under way.*

- **Paul Randy, ICV Coordinator Keynsham & Interim Coordinator Patchway**

*The pandemic ended then Bridgwater ICVs required continued momentum and resilience to navigate through a lengthy volunteer's restructure. In my 9 years and during the pandemic Bridgwater upheld and had never missed the PCC (Home Office) weekly visits requirement. Despite 2 ICVs who left during pandemic and a few left just before the restructure. Throughout the pandemic & OPCC restructure, I experienced (in an already extensive, varied Coordinator role) an increased importance to listen and/or provide emotional, wellbeing support for the team. I recently recognised a point when the team needed to take things steady but at same time look back very proud at the work they did, still do, to support Bridgwater custody to be the high calibre I'm pleased ICVs feel custody are today.*

*As the Coordinator, I've been pleased to hear positive comments from ICVs for Bridgwater custody. For example: really noticed custody staff are increasingly respectful, compassionate and caring towards detainees. I feel there is a great improvement in uses of force that custody consistently use least aggressive methods. That de-escalation is the new normal benefiting detainees and custody alike, awareness keeping detainees happy enables a smooth-running shift, Win, Win. Custody continually evolves, responds to community needs meaning there is never a point when all the work is done. Congruent, consistent excellent standards across all A&SPCC custody areas needed to achieve the ultimate increasingly important goal - increased public trust in the police.*

- **Anita Dibble, ICV Coordinator Bridgwater**

## Priorities for the Scheme 2023-2024

- Work with ICVA and other ICV schemes to ensure that national themes are addressed.
- Ensure effective dissemination and delivery of training to ICVs.
- Promote the work of the scheme and continue to recruit new ICVs into the scheme.
- Work towards adherence of the scheme to the ICVA Quality Assurance Framework and achieving Code Complaint status.
- Continue OPCC wider recruitment for position of Scrutiny & Assurance Manager and Contact & Scrutiny Officer, both of which will be able to support the Scheme.

## Further information about the ICV Scheme

Further information about the ICV Scheme can be viewed through the following link:  
[The Independent Custody Visiting Scheme | OPCC for Avon and Somerset \(avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk\)](https://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk)



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. Further information about ICVA can be viewed through the following link: <https://icva.org.uk/>.

## Get in touch

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