
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

Having completed the end of my first year in office as Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner, I am pleased to introduce the Annual Independent Custody Visiting Report for 2024 – 2025, which covers the period of 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

This report provides a transparent and detailed account of the invaluable work carried out by our Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) over the past year. These dedicated volunteers play a vital role in protecting the rights, welfare, and dignity of individuals held in police custody. Their regular, unannounced visits to custody suites provide an essential independent check, helping to build public trust in how our police service operates behind closed doors.

Over the past twelve months, our ICVs have continued to demonstrate outstanding commitment, conducting visits with professionalism and compassion. Their observations, feedback, and constructive dialogue with custody staff contribute directly to continuous improvement and accountability within Avon and Somerset Police. They also ensure custody is managed lawfully, safely and respectfully.

The strength and independence of our custody visiting scheme reflects our shared values of transparency, fairness, and respect for human rights. I would like to express my sincere thanks to all our ICVs for their time, dedication, and service and to our ICV coordinators for their leadership which plays a crucial role in the success and integrity of the scheme.

I also want to acknowledge the ongoing cooperation and openness of custody staff, whose willingness to engage with the scheme reinforces our collective commitment to high standards of policing.

As we look ahead, I remain committed to supporting and strengthening the Independent Custody Visiting scheme across Avon and Somerset, ensuring that it continues to act as a vital safeguard within our criminal justice system.



Clare Moody
Avon and Somerset Police & Crime Commissioner

A handwritten signature of Clare Moody in black ink.

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>

Avon and Somerset OPCC ICV Scheme Managers are jointly responsible for organising and overseeing the delivery of Custody visiting arrangements in Avon and Somerset. Since April 2024 the scheme has welcomed a further part-time Scrutiny and Assurance Manager to support this critical area of work.

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, Keynsham 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 Centers	No. of Cells
Bridgwater	36
Keynsham	48
Patchway	48

Two of the three sites have 10 vulnerable cells (Keynsham and Patchway) and there are 9 vulnerable cells in Bridgwater. This has been a recent increase from 4 doors at each site and a huge improvement to the sites with the rise in vulnerable detainees coming through custody. Vulnerable cells 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.

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

During their visits, the ICVs will inspect several different areas including:

- Cells and toilets.
- That 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 Managers. 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 26 Custody visiting volunteers. These comprise of 16 female visitors and 10 male visitors – spanning a range of different ages and backgrounds.

The Scheme Managers meet with each ICV panel and the relevant police custody lead three times a year to review reported issues, emerging trends, risks, initiatives, statistics, and general updates. Training materials are distributed throughout the year, and guest speakers frequently attend meetings to share their insights.



The High Sheriff of Somerset had the honour of visiting our Keynsham ICV meeting in July 2024. This visit provided an important opportunity to discuss the role of ICVs in ensuring the welfare and rights of detainees, as well as to acknowledge the invaluable work being carried out by our volunteers in monitoring custody conditions.

The High Sheriff's presence underscored the strong support for independent oversight and reinforced the commitment to maintaining high standards within Avon and Somerset's custody suites.

Keynsham ICVs with the High Sheriff of Somerset Robert Beckley QPM, July 2024

New cohort of ICVs

In November 2023, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) launched a targeted recruitment campaign to expand and strengthen the Independent Custody Visitor (ICV) scheme. Interviews were conducted at the end of March 2024 and into April 2024. This initiative aimed to attract a diverse range of individuals with the necessary skills and commitment to uphold the rights and welfare of detainees in police custody. As a result of this targeted recruitment, 12 new ICVs were successfully onboarded.



These new volunteers underwent a comprehensive training program held in September and October 2024 at Police HQ.

ICVs receiving training at Police HQ

The training equipped them with the essential knowledge and skills required for conducting independent, effective visits to police custody facilities. It covered key areas such as understanding detainee rights, safeguarding procedures, and the protocols for reporting any issues or concerns encountered during custody visits.

Annual ICVA Conference November 2024

The Independent Custody Visiting Association held its annual conference for scheme managers in Birmingham in November 2024. This event provided an invaluable opportunity for scheme managers to come together, share best practices, discuss challenges, and explore new developments in the field of independent custody visiting.

ICVA shared their plans to launch an improved website, with better access to training (more interactive) and a more bespoke training package for new ICVs.

Scheme Managers continue to submit quarterly statistics to ICVA, including information on good practice, concerns raised, and other key insights. This data contributes to national meetings with key stakeholders, such as the Home Office, and underscores the vital role ICV reports play in shaping policy and oversight.

HMICFRS inspection of Avon and Somerset Police custody facilities



In January 2024 HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) jointly carried out an inspection of Avon and Somerset Police's three centres based in Patchway, Keynsham and Bridgwater. The report which was published in May 2024 describes the findings following the inspection of the custody facilities.

The inspection assessed the effectiveness of custody services and outcomes for detained people

throughout the different stages of detention. It examined the force's approach to custody provision in relation to detaining people safely and respectfully, with a particular focus on children and vulnerable adults.

There were some positive findings but also some key areas of concern that relate to children in custody, the management of those at risk of self-harm, the recording of ethnicity of detainees and allocation of female officers to oversee the care of girls in custody.

To help the force improve, there was one recommendation to it and its police and crime commissioner. The report also highlighted there are a further ten areas for improvement. These are set out in section 6 of the report, you can read the HMICFRS inspection report [here](#).

In response to the inspection report, Clare Moody, PCC commented:

'Having questioned the Chief Constable about these findings, I am confident that Avon and Somerset Police are already taking steps to address the recommendations and the areas for improvement.'

I would like to reassure you that as part of my new role, I am already considering and discussing with my team how I will strengthen and oversee the HMICFRS inspection recommendations as part of our governance processes.

My team will also be following up on how our Independent Custody Visitors (ICV) Scheme, a legal duty my office is responsible for delivering, can support the governance processes going forward.'

Statistical analysis

A total of 20,821 individuals were detained across the three Custody centres in Avon and Somerset throughout 2024/2025, this represents a 6.7% increase from last year's statistics. The following demand was recorded across each of the Custody centres:

Table 1: Annual Custody Throughput figures		
PFI Custody Centres	Detainees	Percentage
Bridgwater	7004	33.6
Patchway	7296	35.0
Keynsham	6521	31.3

Of those individuals detained:

- 82.8% identified as male, 16.8% identified as female, 0.4% as unknown/indeterminate.
- 32.2% were between 18-30 years old, with 4.8% between 10 and 17 years old. The remaining 59.6% were aged between 31-60 years old and 3.3% were aged 61 years and over.
- 74.4% self-defined their ethnicity as white, 6.2% as black, 3.5% as Asian, 4% as mixed or multiple ethnic groups, and 2.7% as other ethnicity. The remaining 9.1% of detainees did not declare their ethnicity.

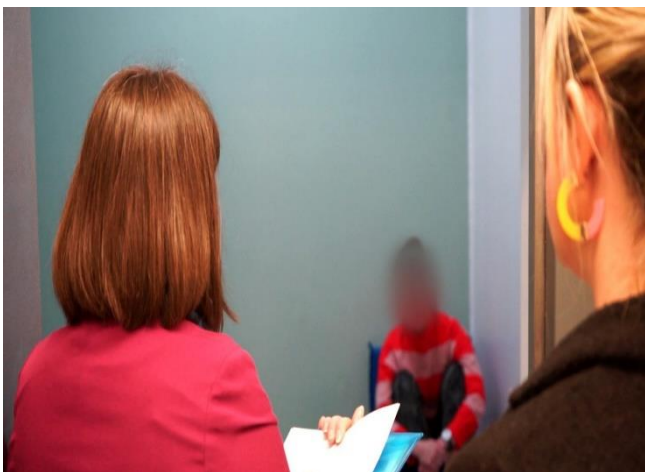
A total of Quarterly statistics are sent by the PCC's office to the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) for national collation. A total of 142 ICV visits were undertaken during 2024/25. The frequency of visiting is 1 visit every 7 days at each of the 3 Custody Units. All visits were physical inspections.

Table 2: ICV visits

DPs through Custody 2024-2025	Total ICV visits	Total DPs at ICV visits	Total no. DPs visited
Apr-Jun: 5,390	34	399	150
Jul-Sep: 5,490	35	374	158
Oct-Dec: 5,877	36	403	183
Jan-Mar: 4,973	37	400	174
Totals:	142	1,576	665

Visits: Summary of findings

Most of the concerns raised by Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) are addressed promptly during their visits. These issues are typically minor in nature, often relating to detainees' comfort and overall satisfaction.



Many ICV visit reports also highlight positive observations, frequently praising custody staff and noting the absence of any significant issues. Reports often describe custody suites as calm, well-managed, and maintained to a high standard.

Commonly noted areas of commendation include the cleanliness of custody kitchens, proper date-ordering of ready meals, tidy shower and sink areas, clean exercise yards, and religious materials being stored neatly and respectfully.

Examples of good practice from forces:

- **Vulnerable cell doors** – the installation of several new vulnerable cell doors, each unit saw an increase from 4 vulnerable cell doors to 10 in two units and 9 in the third unit.
- **Tablets in custody** - Custody has trialled the use of a tablet in Keynsham for accessing translation services. Based on positive feedback, including input from ICVs, custody will be introducing tablets at the other two suites as well.
- **Neurodiversity signage** – signage has been introduced across all three suites, allowing staff to display the neurodiversity symbol on cell doors to indicate when a detainee may be neurodivergent. This initiative has helped create a more inclusive custody environment for neurodivergent individuals



Causes for ICV concern:

- **Staffing levels** - maintaining adequate staffing levels in custody remains an ongoing challenge. This has affected ICV visits, with two visits being aborted and at least six others delayed due to staff shortages. ICVs frequently note that custody staff appear under significant pressure. A key concern raised by ICVs is whether staff stress and compromised welfare could, in turn, affect the treatment and wellbeing of detainees. These issues are consistently raised with senior custody management, who remain focused on recruitment and retention efforts to address the problem.
- **Sleeping reviews** – ICVs have noted that detainees are not being informed of the outcome when a review takes place while they are asleep. These issues have been identified through their checks of custody records. Scheme Managers continue to highlight this to Custody management, regular messaging and dip-sampling of custody records is being implemented in a hope to improve this.
- **Books, reading materials and fidget toys** – these items are not always routinely being offered to detainees.
- **HCP provision** – although staffing issues have improved with HCP being on site, there are still times when HCP coverage is insufficient, particularly during the night.

Examples of where ICVs have affected change:

- **Allergen charts** - During a visit, ICVs noticed that one of the Bistro Express meals offered to detainees was not covered on the allergy chart on the wall in the custody kitchens. This was highlighted within their report, and Scheme Managers were able to raise to custody immediately. The Logistics Coordinator spoke to the manufacturers of the meals who in turn, provided allergen charts for each of their meals to be placed in the custody kitchen areas.
- **Menopause packs** - ICVs noticed that menopause packs were not being routinely offered to female detainees over a certain age. New messaging was sent out to custody staff to remind them of the availability of the meno-packs and to ensure they are offered at booking in.
- **Gluten free options** - ICVs prompted custody to look at additional gluten free options, this is currently being considered.
- **Stocks of fidget toys and reading glasses** – ICVs frequently report low stock levels of these items, this has in turn led to more regular replenishment and prompted consideration of maintaining higher stock quantities overall.
- **Food probe in kitchen area** – ICVs have observed that the probe used to test food temperature is sometimes found unwashed, which could pose a health and safety risk. To address this, Custody has provided wipes to help mitigate the issue.

Comments from Panel Coordinators

'In the first half of the year the team of Independent Custody Visitors remained short on numbers across the three Avon & Somerset custody suites. However, the recruitment program successfully addressed this, and new volunteers joined the team towards the end of 2024 after vetting was completed. The Keynsham team grew from 8 to 10. This is the optimum size for the team as it gives us flexibility to cover holidays, sickness etc. without becoming too large.

The Keynsham team continued to provide support to Patchway until the autumn, when the new recruits came on stream. Thanks to all those who helped with this in addition to their responsibilities at Keynsham.

This year has seen an increase in the level of engagement between the OPCC and the ICVs through panel meetings, training sessions and regular communication. This is helping with making custody visits well targeted and focussed on priorities, such as staffing levels, 3rd party service providers etc. Whilst we always look at specific detainee issues as a first priority and try to ensure they are resolved during our visits; we also identify and highlight more systemic issues. For example: the high administration workload faced by the health care team, which detracts from their front-line care capacity.

Keynsham has a strong, dedicated, and experienced ICV team, thanks go to all of them for another excellent year'.

Keith Taylor, ICV Coordinator Keynsham

'This time last year our numbers were depleted to 4, a workable number is 8 to 10 to maintain a rota of a visit every 7 days. Many thanks to the 5 Keynsham ICVs, drafted in by me, not only committed to their own rota, but did extra visits at Patchway, many thanks, so very much appreciated.

The OPCC swiftly organised a recruitment drive for Independent Custody Visitors. At Patchway 6 potential recruits were interviewed and all 6 were accepted.

A Patchway Custody Tour was organised for the new recruits, my thanks to the Custody Staff who facilitated this, in a busy working environment. Shadow visits were organised with experienced pairings over a 3-month rota.

Unfortunately, 1 recruit decided to leave, because of a career change and a conflict of interest. Finally, we are now going into a 3rd 3-month rota with a workable number of 9 with 5 ICVs who are now entering their 6-month review period and then if accepted and are prepared to commit to another 3 years. Incidentally, Keith and I were awarded by the PCC, Clare Moody a 10-year Certificate of Achievement, very much appreciated.

My thanks to the OPCC staff for their support throughout the past 12 months and not forgetting our "Critical Friends" the Custody Staff for their friendly and professional help in making our visits a success in transparency and accountability with the upholding of Rights and Entitlements of the detained persons.'

Paul Randy, Patchway Custody ICV Coordinator

'The Bridgwater ICV team has gained 3 new members and they are all now up to speed and participating fully in the visits. Welcome Terry, Paul and David. We are now a team of 7 but still need to add a couple more volunteers for a full compliment. Our former Coordinator Anita stepped down after 10 + years of service. She is greatly missed.

We have managed to fulfil all the rota slots despite a depleted team and have incorporated the new ICVs for training on the job. Thanks to all experienced ICVs who participated in this. Staff shortages within the Custody Suite saw some visits refused because there was no-one free to escort us but the situation appears to have improved. Along with more Detention Officers, it has been apparent that Inspectors, HCPs and ASCC staff are all mostly present.

Becky, Dee and the OPCC team continue to offer support and provide a vital link between us and Police staff. Overall, the Custody Suite has felt calm and ordered with staff recognising and enabling our work.

Concerns about the shortage of Appropriate Adults and Translators remain. Recently we have noticed an apparent lack of notification given to detainees for whom a Review occurred whilst they were asleep. We will continue to monitor this and raise in our reports. We have been pleased to see that stocks of Distraction (Fidget) Toys and Reading Glasses have been sourced and we will look to see that they are routinely offered where appropriate. We have renewed our appeal for books and magazines for Custody'.

Carrie Skinner, ICV Coordinator Bridgwater

Priorities for the ICV Scheme 2025-2026

- Work with ICVA and other ICV schemes to ensure that national themes are addressed.
- Collaborate closely with Avon and Somerset Constabulary to provide training for Custody Detention Officers and Sergeants, ensuring they are well-informed about the ICV Scheme.
- Maintaining the schemes Code Compliant status awarded by ICVA's Quality Assurance Framework, ready for reassessment in 2025-26. However, where possible work towards achieving a higher level of accreditation.
- Increase social media outputs to highlight the good work of and promote the scheme.
- Keep in view the concept of the creation of a Custody Scrutiny Panel.
- Scheme Managers to work with Formation Media to introduce Version 2 of the Avon and Somerset Custody App for reporting.

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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