



Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) Scheme

ANNUAL REPORT 2025-2026

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FOREWORD FROM THE AVON & SOMERSET POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

Having completed my second year in office as Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner, I am pleased to introduce the Annual Independent Custody Visiting Report for 2025–2026, covering the period from the 1st of April 2025 to the 31st of March 2026.

This report provides a transparent and detailed account of the invaluable work carried out by our Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) over the past year. ICVs 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 essential independent scrutiny, helping to build and maintain public trust in how policing operates behind closed doors.

Over the past year, our ICVs have shown continued professionalism, care and commitment in carrying out their role. Their observations and constructive engagement with custody staff play an important part in supporting accountability and driving ongoing improvement across Avon and Somerset Police. This helps ensure that custody is delivered lawfully, safely and with respect.

The strength of the scheme reflects our shared commitment to openness, fairness and the protection of human rights. I would like to thank all our ICVs for the time and dedication they give to this work, as well as our ICV Coordinators, whose leadership and support are integral to the scheme's success.

I also want to recognise the positive and open approach of custody staff, whose engagement with the scheme demonstrates a shared commitment to maintaining high standards. I welcome Chief Inspector Dan Ashfield, who took on the role of Head of Custody in July 2025, and I look forward to working together to continue strengthening these services.

During this reporting period, I was pleased to appoint Kevin Slocombe as Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, and I look forward to working together as we continue to develop this important area of work.



PCC Clare Moody

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 [here](#)

Avon and Somerset OPCC ICV Scheme Managers are jointly 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, Keynsham and Bridgwater Police Centre**. ICVs are allocated upon appointment to a specific panel.



Fig 1 – Bridgwater Police Station

ICVs carry out unannounced visits at least once per week across all three custody locations. These visits take place at **varying times, including evenings and weekends**, to ensure that scrutiny reflects the full range of custody operations. All three custody centres operate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, providing continuous detention facilities across the force area.

Each custody suite is equipped to safely manage a diverse range of detainees, including those who may be vulnerable. **Bridgwater Police Centre has nine designated vulnerable cells**, while **Keynsham and Patchway each have ten**. These cells are specifically designed for individuals identified as being at increased risk, incorporating enhanced safety features and enabling closer















monitoring by custody staff. This supports the effective safeguarding of detainees' welfare, ensuring that appropriate care and attention is provided throughout their time in custody.

PFI Custody Centers	No. of Cells
Bridgwater	36
Keynsham	48
Patchway	48

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, Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) inspect a range of areas and considerations within the Custody environment, including:

-  **Cells and facilities** – the condition and cleanliness of cells and associated toilet facilities.
-  **CCTV** – the presence and operational status of CCTV.
-  **Temperature** – whether appropriate temperatures are maintained within cells and across the Custody suite.
-  **Medical care** – whether detainees have received any required medical attention or medication.
-  **Injuries** – whether any visible injuries have been identified and appropriately explained.
-  **Female detainee welfare** – whether hygiene needs are recognised and addressed.
-  **Personal care** – access to washing facilities and provision of clean clothing where required.
-  **Food and bedding** – cleanliness and hygiene of food preparation areas and bedding.
-  **Religious provision** – appropriate storage and availability of religious materials.
-  **Detainee experience** – detainee perceptions of, and satisfaction with, their treatment.
-  **Rest periods** – whether detainees held overnight have been afforded appropriate rest.
-  **Custody records** – with consent, reviewing records to corroborate the detainee's account



Where a visit identifies **any concerns regarding the treatment of detainees or the conditions within the Custody suite**, these are **recorded within the visit report** and **raised with the Custody Sergeant** at the time. Any action taken by the Custody Sergeant (or Escorting Officer) should also be documented by the ICVs, with the issue marked as resolved where appropriate.

If ICVs are **not satisfied that the issue has been adequately addressed**, they may **escalate their concerns by requesting to speak with the Duty Inspector**.

Unresolved issues, or those requiring wider oversight, are escalated to the **ICV Scheme Managers**, including matters that require a response from the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). Feedback is then formally provided to ICVs, following engagement with the



Custody Inspector or, in more serious cases, the Head of Custody, ensuring both accountability and continuous improvement.

SCHEME COMPOSITION

The Avon and Somerset Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) Scheme is currently supported by **26 active volunteers**, comprising **17 female and 9 male visitors**, reflecting a broad and diverse range of ages, experiences and backgrounds. This diversity is an important strength of the scheme, helping to ensure that custody visiting reflects the communities it serves and brings a wide range of perspectives to independent scrutiny.

During this reporting period, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) launched a targeted recruitment campaign to address natural turnover within the scheme. Following a programme of interviews conducted in Summer 2025, **seven new ICVs were successfully recruited and onboarded**. This has further strengthened the capacity, resilience and sustainability of the scheme, ensuring continued effective coverage across all custody centres.

Ongoing engagement and governance are key to the effectiveness of the scheme. Scheme Managers meet with each ICV panel, and the relevant custody leads three times a year to review issues raised, emerging themes, identified risks, new initiatives and performance data. These meetings provide a structured opportunity to identify trends, share learning and support continuous improvement across custody services.

ICVs are supported through ongoing learning and development, with regular training materials and guest speakers providing specialist insight. This ensures they remain well-informed, confident, and effective in their role.



ICVA UPDATES

In November 2025, Scheme Managers attended **the ICVA Annual Scheme Managers' Conference in London**, providing an opportunity to share learning, discuss national issues, and strengthen links with other schemes.

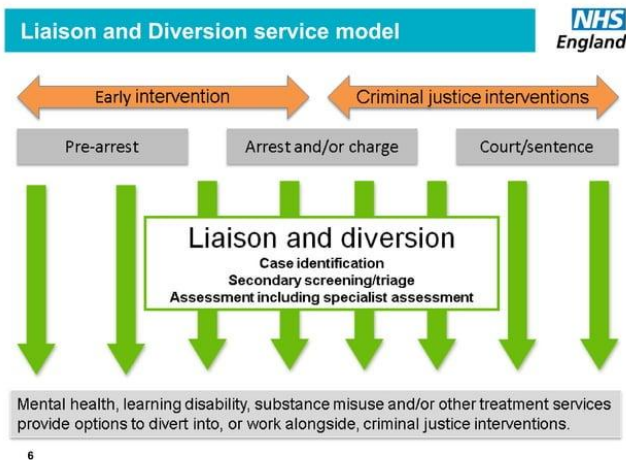
A key focus was the launch of **ICVA's new e-learning platform**, offering flexible, nationally aligned training for both new and experienced visitors. The platform supports improved consistency, easier tracking of learning, and more responsive updates in line with changes to legislation and guidance. In addition to this, ICVA continues to support ICVs through a programme of online events, including webinars and briefings, which provide timely updates, practical guidance, and opportunities to explore emerging issues in custody visiting practice.

Scheme Managers are also working towards **Gold level accreditation under the ICVA Quality Assurance Framework**, reflecting a commitment to best practice, strong governance, effective volunteer management, and high-quality reporting.



Quarterly data returns to ICVA continue, capturing good practice, concerns, and emerging themes. This contributes to national discussions with stakeholders, including the Home Office, and highlights the role of ICV findings in informing policy and strengthening oversight.

TRI-ANNUAL THEMES & KEY ACTIVITY



Throughout the year, ICVs benefited from presentations by a range of partner organisations, whose input supported improved understanding of detainee welfare, safeguarding and the wider criminal justice system.

In **July 2025** colleagues from the Integrated Non-Custodial Service Liaison and Diversion Service (LaDS) attended the Panel to provide an overview of their work across all three custody suites and Bristol courts.

Operating seven days a week, LaDS identifies and supports individuals entering the criminal justice system who have vulnerabilities such as mental ill health, learning disabilities, substance misuse, autism or acquired brain injury.

The service undertakes early screening and in-depth assessments in custody or court, referring individuals into appropriate health, social care and treatment pathways and, with consent, sharing insights to inform police and judicial decision-making around arrest, bail, sentencing and remand.

The Panel also heard about the service's close working relationships with custody staff, including daily discussions with police to support safe release planning, and its NHS-led funding model with increasing co-commissioning. LaDS confirmed that all contact with juveniles is recorded and welcomed engagement and enquiries from ICVs during visits.

In **November 2025** the Panel received input from [The Appropriate Adult Service](#) which outlined the safeguarding role of Appropriate Adults for vulnerable detainees in police custody.

TAAS explained how Appropriate Adults support detainees to understand and exercise their rights, facilitate communication with police, and attend all key custodial stages including interviews, searches, identification procedures and charging. Guided by PACE Code C and Home Office guidance, Appropriate Adults observe treatment in custody, guard against coercion, and actively consider whether detainees require access to legal advice.



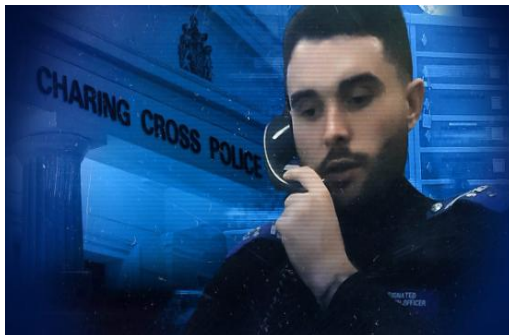
The service operates across the Keynsham, Patchway and Bridgwater custody suites with 12–15 trained Appropriate Adults available on a 24/7 basis, typically responding within 30 minutes. Support concludes when detainees leave custody.

In **February 2026** the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner (DPCC) provided an update to ICVs on forthcoming national reforms, including the abolition of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), alongside changes to force structures, revised scrutiny arrangements, and increased Home Office oversight. While these developments may create some uncertainty around future governance, it was noted that Independent Custody Visiting will remain a statutory requirement, ensuring the continuation of independent oversight within custody settings.

Lay Observers virtually attended the meeting and outlined their statutory role in monitoring detainee treatment during court custody and escort, providing valuable insight into the detainee journey beyond police custody.

Drawing on findings from the national Broken Journeys, Broken System report, they highlighted ongoing systemic issues including excessive journey times linked to prison capacity pressures, late arrivals at court, welfare concerns during transport, and limited contractual levers within current escorting arrangements. Additional concerns were raised around incomplete custody and escort records, inconsistent access to healthcare, hunger and hydration issues on arrival at court, and risks to dignity arising from public handcuffing and the mixed transport of women, children and men.

Lay Observers emphasised the benefits of closer partnership working with ICVs and PCC oversight to strengthen scrutiny and develop a more joined-up understanding of detainee welfare across the system.



PANORAMA DOCUMENTARY; UNDERCOVER IN THE POLICE

During the November ICV panel meetings, PCC Clare Moody attended and reflected on the Panorama documentary. The programme followed an undercover BBC journalist who spent several months working inside a Metropolitan Police Station (Charing Cross in London). Through secret filming, it exposed evidence of racism, misogyny, and discriminatory attitudes among some officers, alongside concerns about excessive use of force, dismissive attitudes towards victims (including rape complainants), and a culture where misconduct was tolerated or not challenged.

Overall, the documentary suggested that these issues were not just isolated incidents but pointed to deeper cultural problems within parts of policing, raising serious concerns about standards, accountability, and public trust.

The consensus among Independent Custody Visitors was that this type of conduct had not been observed within Avon and Somerset Constabulary custody units.

[Independent Custody Visiting Scheme](#)



However, it reinforced the importance of continued independent scrutiny in identifying and challenging potential cultural issues within policing, including inappropriate attitudes and behaviours.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

A total of 20,907 individuals were detained across the three Custody centers in Avon and Somerset throughout 2025/2026, this represents a 0.41% increase from last year's statistics which saw an increase of 6.7%. The following demand was recorded across each of the Custody centers:

Table 1: Annual Custody Throughput figures		
PFI Custody Centers	Detainees	Percentage
Bridgwater	7021	33.6
Patchway	7395	35.4
Keynsham	6491	31.0

Of those individuals detained:

Gender: The custody population is predominantly male, accounting for 82.8% of all individuals (17,318), while females represent 16.9% (3,533). All other categories (unknown, blank, and indeterminate) each make up only around 0.1%, indicating that gender is recorded clearly in many cases.

Age: The majority of individuals in custody are aged 31–60, representing 61.2% (12,787), followed by those aged 18–30 at 30.3% (6,326). Young people aged 10–17 account for a smaller proportion at 4.8% (1,007), while those aged 61 and over represent 3.7% (770). Age is recorded in nearly all cases, with only 0.1% listed as unknown.

Ethnicity: The data shows that the majority of individuals across all custody suites identify as White British, accounting for 67.6% of the total (14,132 out of 20,906). When combined with other White backgrounds (including Irish and other White groups), this rises to over 74%, indicating that the custody population is predominantly White.

Black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) groups are represented across all sites, with African (2.8%) and Caribbean (2.1%) groups being the largest proportions within these categories, followed by individuals of mixed or multiple ethnic backgrounds (around 3.7% combined). Asian groups collectively account for a smaller proportion (approximately 3.8%).

A notable proportion of cases (9.7%) are recorded as "Not Stated," which may limit the completeness of ethnicity-based analysis. Overall, while there is representation from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, the data indicates a predominantly White custody population with smaller but significant minority group representation across all three suites.



This table provides a summary of custody demand and ICV activity across the year, showing how independent visits align with the number of detainees passing through custody, and the extent of detainee engagement during those visits.

<u>Table 2: ICV Visits</u>			
<u>DPs through Custody</u> <u>2025-2026</u>	<u>Total ICV</u> <u>Visits</u>	<u>Total DPs at</u> <u>ICV Visits</u>	<u>Total No. DPs</u> <u>visited</u>
Apr-Jun: 5221	37	380	161
Jul-Sep: 5221	37	405	177
Oct-Dec: 5251	40	444	163
Jan-Mar: 5137	41	297	118
Totals:	155	1526	619

VISITS: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Most concerns raised by Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) are resolved promptly during visits and are generally minor, often relating to detainee comfort and satisfaction.

ICV reports also frequently highlight positive practice, noting no significant issues and describing custody suites as calm, well-managed, and maintained to a high standard. Common areas of commendation include the cleanliness of custody kitchens, correct date-ordering of meals, well-maintained shower and sink areas, clean exercise yards, and the respectful storage of religious materials. These observations provide reassurance around the overall quality of care and the standards maintained within custody environments.

Examples of good practice

- **Digital innovation:** Tablets have been introduced across all three custody suites, improving detainees' access to information and supporting their overall welfare.
- **Enhanced security:** The implementation of metal detectors has strengthened safety and security within custody environments.
- **Environmental improvements:** Progress has been made in sustainability initiatives, including the installation of new recycling bins across all custody units.
- **Healthcare provision:** Improvements in healthcare provision (HCP) have enhanced both the quality and responsiveness of care available to detainees.



Causes for ICV concern:

- **Sleeping Reviews:** Ongoing ICV scrutiny has highlighted gaps in informing detainees when reviews take place while they are asleep. This has been recognised by the police as an area for improvement, despite operational challenges.
- **Neurodivergence:** ICV questioning has supported clearer articulation of the reasonable adjustments available in custody, including the use of vulnerable cells, lighting adjustments, fidget toys, and increased observation levels, alongside the continued importance of staff training.
- **Female detainee care:** ASC dip sampling has identified low compliance with requirements for a female point of contact, resulting in this becoming a targeted area for ongoing monitoring.
- **Detainee welfare items:** Books, reading materials, and fidget toys are not always routinely offered to detainees, highlighting an opportunity to improve consistency supporting detainee wellbeing.
- **SERCO:** delays continue

Examples of where ICVs have affected change:

- **Food temperature probe:** ICVs observed that the probe used to test food temperatures was occasionally found unclean, presenting a potential hygiene risk. In response, custody staff have introduced cleaning wipes to support improved practice.
- **Allergy information display:** ICVs noted that the allergy guidance sheet for ProPak meals was missing from Kitchen 2 at one site. This was promptly addressed by the on-duty Sergeant, who replaced it immediately - demonstrating positive responsiveness to ICV observations.
- **Food stock management:** Out-of-date gluten-free food items were identified and subsequently replenished, highlighting the need for continued attention to stock checks and dietary provision.



COMMENTS FROM PANEL COORDINATORS:



KEYNSHAM
Keith Taylor:

The ICV team in Keynsham experienced some turnover in terms of team membership during the year. We were pleased to welcome two new members to the team in late 2024, but we lost three experienced team members during 2025, one of whom moved on to the Police Powers Panel. With one further new recruit we managed to bring the team back up to eight. Thanks to the commitment and support of all the ICVs we were able to run a complete weekly rota throughout the year. With two new ICV's starting in Q2 of 2026 the team should be back up to its optimal level of ten people.

We have seen a number of improvements during our visits over the past year, most notably in terms of improved staffing coverage especially in healthcare provision. We have also experienced an improvement in the level of engagement with staff during our visits. The improved level of communication at panel meetings has also contributed towards this.

The excellent level of support we receive from the OPCC team helps us to make a positive contribution and to also to make us feel that we can make a difference.

Thanks go to all of the team members for their continued dedication and the personal time that they give to the scheme.



PATCHWAY
Paul Randy:

At the beginning of 2025 our Patchway Panel was struggling with 5 ICVs to cover weekly visits, but visits were maintained throughout each month, with ICVs volunteering 1 extra visit per week or more, over the required period.

Fortunately, there were 5 new recruits onboarded to swell our numbers to 10. When successfully vetted they were able to move on to a Custody Tour, my sincere thanks to the Custody Staff for facilitating this and making them most welcome. Shadow visits accompanying the experienced paired ICVs and finally a full day's training at ASP HQ at Portishead, overseen by the very experienced OPCC Staff.

Although our numbers were up to a workable 10, due to holidays and personal circumstances throughout the year, at times we were back to a rota of 5 again, ICVs pulling together to keep an almost 100% visit of the required 1 visit every 7 days, Well done team!

Over the last 12-month period, there were no outstanding issues found, only outside resources of transportation to court and prison occasionally. Well done to the Custody Staff!

Congratulations to Keith Townsend and I as we were awarded a certificate for completing 10 years as an ICV from the PCC Clare Moody.





BRIDGWATER

Richard Denby:

I took over as ICV Coordinator for Bridgwater in September 2025, and I would like to thank my predecessor, Carrie Skinner for her excellent work whilst in the role. At the time of my taking over, we had 5 ICVs including myself and this led to some extra rota slots by a depleted team. The ideal team size would be 8 –10 members to give us cover for holidays or sickness. We have not missed any weekly slots since that time, and I would like to thank the Bridgwater team, Pearl, Terry, David and Simon for their hard work and dedication. Recently, a recruitment drive has led to Jo joining us with a further 4 ICVs awaiting vetting. Fingers crossed that the team's workload falls back to more sensible levels in the near future.








We continue to find that PACE Code C, S40 Inspector reviews are a problem area and especially when the detainee is sleeping at the time of the review. Our instinct is that this is more driven by Inspector workload than any other reason. Other areas have seen considerable improvement in detainee treatment with such things as availability of Appropriate Adults, neurodiverse signage and the less claustrophobic, enlarged cell windows.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the custody staff at Bridgwater for an excellent working relationship between themselves and the ICV team. They are without exception, helpful, courteous and patient. In addition to the Bridgwater custody staff and on behalf of the team I would like to thank the OPCC staff for their professional help, advice and support. Their recruitment efforts to strengthen our team has been excellent.

It's been a challenging year but one that with great support from the OPCC and considerable enthusiasm within the Bridgwater team, we have managed to carry out our role as a critical friend of ASC successfully and have therefore overseen and upheld the rights and entitlements of detainees at Bridgwater.



PRIORITIES FOR THE ICV SCHEME 2025-2026

-  Work with ICVA and other ICV schemes to ensure that national themes are identified and addressed
-  Collaborate with Avon and Somerset Constabulary to deliver training for Custody Detention Officers and Sergeants, ensuring awareness and understanding of the ICV Scheme
-  Maintain Code Compliant status under the ICVA Quality Assurance Framework, while progressing towards higher levels of accreditation ahead of reassessment in 2025–26
-  Increase social media engagement to promote the scheme and highlight the valuable work of ICVs
-  Support the Use of Force in Custody Scrutiny Panel, strengthening oversight and transparency
-  Work with Constabulary colleagues to improve provision for neurodivergent detainees in custody
-  Continue partnership with Formation Media to develop Version 2 of the Custody App, enhancing reporting and data capture.



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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