

# Independent Custody Visiting Scheme

Annual Report

April 2020 – March 2021



## What is Independent Custody Visiting?

Independent Custody Visiting is a national requirement, detailed in a Home Office Code of Practice and supported by the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA), whereby specially trained members of the public make random and unannounced visits to custody suites to check on the welfare of detainees and the conditions they are being held in. Locally, Independent Custody Visiting is under the remit of the Police and Crime Commissioner for the area who has authority for running and maintaining the scheme in their force area. Therefore, within this reporting year, within Surrey this falls to David Munro.

Independent Custody Visiting provides protection to detainees and the police, and reassurance to the wider community. Volunteers from Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) Schemes across the UK independently check on the welfare of detainees who may be feeling vulnerable or confused, providing independent scrutiny of their treatment and the conditions in which they are being held. Independent Custody Visiting Schemes exist to provide reassurance to local communities that they can have confidence in the way in which the police treat people who are held in their custody.

Independent Custody Visiting allows the police to demonstrate their commitment to transparency and provides public reassurance that policing in their area is fair and in accordance with statutory legislation and guidance. The aim of this Annual Report is to ensure that this information is available in the public domain.

When recently asked why they felt the ICV role was so important, one volunteer commented: *“ICVs play a critical role in providing the eyes of the public and transparency for the police in a process that is otherwise “hidden” from public view. It is critically important that there is public confidence on what goes on behind closed doors in the custody suite and ICVs make this possible by providing truly independent review”*.



## How the Scheme is Organised in Surrey?

Surrey Police operates from three custody suites at Guildford, Staines and Salfords (located in the Reigate area).

The cell capacity is as follows:-

- Guildford (24 cells)
- Salfords (24 cells)
- Staines (19 cells)

Each of the three custody suites has its own panel of ICVs. The panel is responsible for organising the visiting rota and undertaking the visits.

Pre April 2020, all visits without exception were, what we now class as **Physical Visits**. This involved ICVs entering custody, talking to detainees and officers alike. However, the last 12 months due to Covid-19, has presented a real challenge to custody visiting resulting in having to temporarily revise how visits happen whilst maintaining a level of custody oversight and meeting the PCCs statutory duties. As a result **Oversight Calls** were instigated.

- **Physical Visits** - During a routine custody visit, a member of the custody staff escorts the visitors around the suite to ensure their safety. Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) enter police cells and seek permission from the detained individual to speak to them. Conversations with detainees focus on welfare needs and the provision of rights and entitlements under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE). With permission from the detainee, they will also review the notes kept on their treatment during detention. ICVs are not concerned with the identity of the detainee or with the reason for their detention. Any issues raised are discussed as appropriate with custody staff. ICVs also inspect and comment on the general condition and facilities of the custody suite including the kitchen, medical room and showers.
- **Oversight Calls** - Whilst no one could question the importance of the monitoring physical visiting gives, it felt socially responsible to temporarily suspend all visiting in March 2020 and implement an interim solution/alternative. Given custody visitors are all volunteers it felt inappropriate to expose anyone through custody visiting to the virus and equally hate for the volunteers to take the virus into custody and impact what was predicted to be stretched resources. The PCC had a duty of care to the volunteers. Oversight Calls are unannounced weekly monitoring calls weekly between a pair of ICVs and a custody officer. During the call the ICVs will talk through each detainee, ensure they have had their rights and entitlements met, that appropriate adults and solicitors have been called and are available where necessary and that custody is happy with its hand washing and PPE provision etc.
- In both formats, ICVs look, listen, observe and at the end of each visit, report back to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) on their findings. The OPCC takes any issues raised to Surrey Police in the appropriate way, keeping ICVs informed of feedback and actions agreed.

- In addition to visits each panel meets (currently virtually) on a quarterly basis with the Custody Inspector responsible for the suite and the ICV Scheme Manager to discuss the visits made and any issues raised.

Throughout 2020/21 visit format fluctuated between these 2 visit formats dependant on the lockdown restrictions, the prevalence of Covid in the community, the custody/Police resources and ICVs personal risk assessments and their preferences. It was of utmost importance that at no stage should any volunteer have felt pressurised to enter custody to conduct a visit if they did not feel entirely comfortable in doing so.

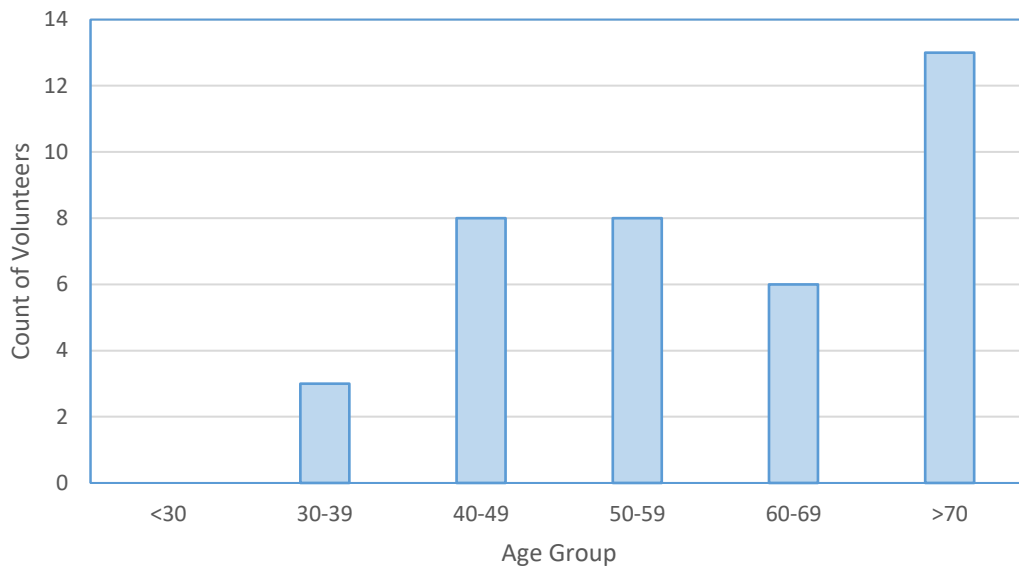
## Recruitment & Demographics

ICVs are independent of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the police, and will have no direct involvement in the criminal justice system. They come from a variety of backgrounds, must be over 18 and live or work within the Surrey Police area. At the close of 2020/21 there were 38 active Independent Custody Visitors working within Surrey.

Exploring the composition of volunteers' further shows the following:

- Our volunteers are 68% female, 32% male. The census data from 2011 shows within Surrey, 51% of the entire 1,132,000 population is female, 49% male.
- The average age of our ICVs is 59. (Full details on the age breakdown are indicated in the bar chart).
- The average length of service is slightly over 5 years with over 208 years of combined service. 37% have completed over 5 years of service, with our longest serving member having 25 years of experience.
- 10% of all volunteers come from a BME or Non British background.
- Over the last year, we have sadly lost 5 volunteers and recruited 2 new ICVs. As a result, the male/female ratio whilst still female dominated has balanced slightly and the average age has reduced by a further 1 year.

### 1. Age Spread of ICV Volunteers



## Routine ICV Visits

Visits provide a snapshot of what is going on in custody at the time of the visit and are undertaken across all days of the week and on a 24 hour basis. Each ICV Panel aims to complete one weekly visit between the hours of 6am and 11pm and one monthly 'out of hours' (OOH) visit (between 11pm and 6am). This is crucial to ensure that visits do not become predictable and do not occur at set times.

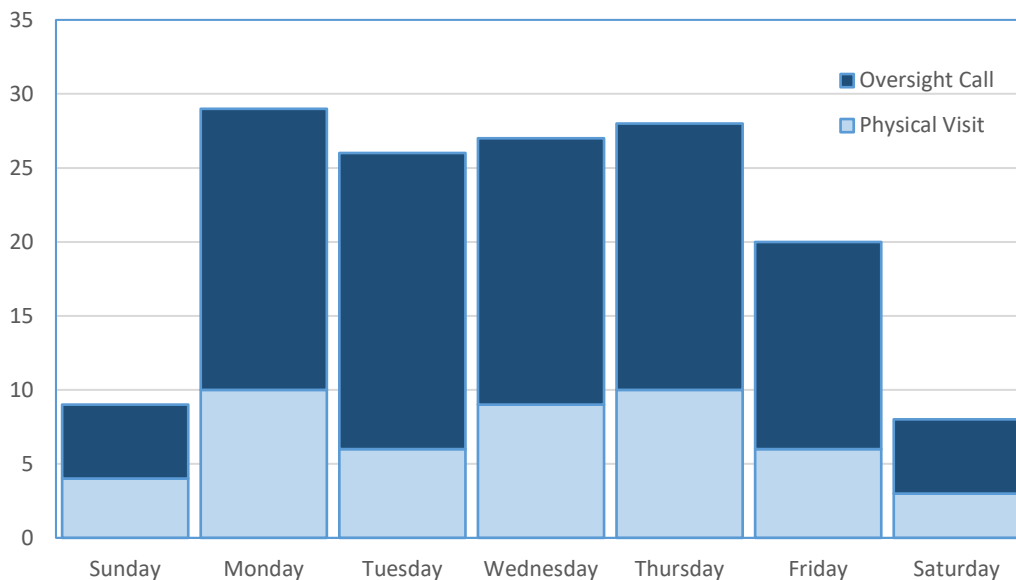
When looking at the number of visits between the 1st April 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, the following can be established:

- Surrey's ICVs conducted a total of 147 unannounced, random physical visits or oversight call across Surrey's custody suites.
- Surrey ICVs spent approximately 265 hours monitoring custody during the year.
- Visits were well spread over the entire week and hours of the day, thus helping keep ICV visits unpredictable. However, weekend visits are still considerably less frequent across the estate than weekday visits.
- The average (physical) visit lasted 1 hour, 45 minutes an increase year on year of 16 minutes.

### 2. ICV Visit Statistics

	Surrey Wide	Guildford	Salfords	Staines
Visits Undertaken to Date	147	49	53	45
Physical Visits	47	14	23	10
Oversight Calls	100	35	30	35

### 3. Spread of ICV Visits by Day



## ICV & Welfare Checks

During the 2020/21 reporting year, a total of 11,392 people were held in Surrey custody centres, this was an decrease of 272 (2.3%) people from the previous year. At the time of the ICV visits (in either format) a total of 872 detainees were in custody (7.7% of overall annual custody population). This sample size is marginally reduced from the previous reporting year (-1.1%). Of these 872 people:

- 255 detainees in custody at the time of a physical ICV visit.
- Of this 255 detainees, 174 or 68% were available to the ICVs (whilst numbers are smaller, this a 14% increase year on year). The remaining 32% of detainees were not available to the ICVs for justifiable reasons such as sleeping, being in interview or being booked in or out by the police or in rare cases due to custody being busy the detainee not selected for sampling.
- 146 of the 174 (84%) available detainees when asked by ICVs if they were willing to discuss their treatment in police custody agreed to do so.
- 22 detainees (13% of those asked) whilst declining a custody visit, agreed that the ICVs could have access to their custody record in order to obtain an overview of their treatment whilst held in custody.
- In total, 167 detainees (96%) expressively gave their consent for their custody record to be viewed by ICVs.
- Only 6 detainees (3%) refused both the opportunity to talk to an ICV and for them to review their custody records.
- 10 (6%) detainees in custody at the time of ICV visit were children or young people (up from 3% last year).

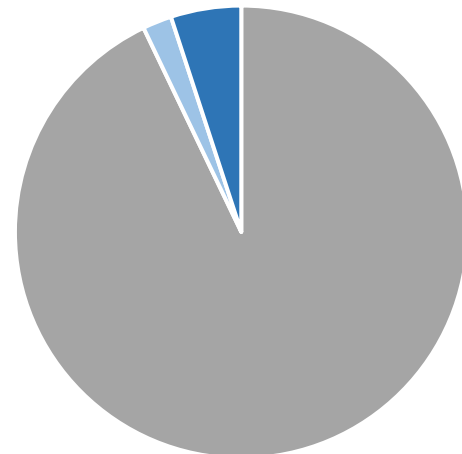
#### 4. ICV Interaction with Detainees

	Surrey Wide 2020-2021 Performance	Guildford	Salfords	Staines
<b>Number of detainees in custody during ICV visits</b>	<b>872</b>	94	104	57
Detainee agreed to both interview & records check	145	41	61	43
Detainee agreed to interview, refused records check	1	1	0	0
Detainee refused to interview but agreed to records check	22	12	10	0
Detainee refused both interview & records check	6	3	3	0
Number of detainees where interview wasn't possible but records were checked	75	33	29	13
Number not selected for sampling	6	4	1	1
Detainees present during an Oversight Call (therefore no opportunity to talk directly to detainee)	617	204	201	212
<b>Number of detainees receiving some form of direct welfare check by an ICV</b>	<b>243</b>	87	100	56

During visits, Surrey ICVs assume access to the anonymised custody records of detainees who are not available to them in order to have some kind of overview of the welfare and treatment of as many detainees as possible (75 during this reporting period). Taking this into account, ICVs had some form of direct welfare access to 243 of the detainees in custody at the time of their visit. In addition to this 617 detainees welfare was investigated with a custody officer during an oversight call (as with these ICVs had no opportunity to speak directly to the detainee or personally examine their custody records).

These are felt to be positive results when considering the challenges the pandemic presented and the fact that despite this, community oversight remained an integral part of custody within Surrey. This is largely due to the professionalism and flexibility of the volunteers and the police's continued commitment to and support of the scheme.

#### 5. ICV Impact on Custody Population



- Total Custody Population
- % of total custody population in custody during a physical ICV visit
- % of total custody population in custody during an oversight call

## ICV Feedback

ICVs are encouraged to resolve minor welfare concerns raised by detainees with staff at the time of their visit. They debrief with a custody sergeant at the end of each visit wherever possible enabling clarification of issues where necessary on both sides. Any issues which cannot be resolved in custody or over the phone are always taken forward by the ICV Scheme Manager as appropriate. Concerns reported to the Scheme Manager are logged and followed up with the Force. The outcomes are notified to all ICVs to enable discussion at panel meetings and cross-panel learning.

In the period covered by this report, ICVs raised and resolved concerns around issues such as:-

- Staff Morale – during an oversight call, ICVs became aware of how stretched and stressed custody officers were due to the implications of Covid-19. This immediately resulted in escalating their concerns to the Scheme Manager who in turn followed up with the Chief Inspector. As a result of this, and the forces continual monitoring of the situation, staffing levels were increased and support from Occupational Health sought.
- Shortages of Blankets/Towels – After the second visit in a week to a suite which was experiencing a noticeable shortage of essential supplies, thus impacting detainees wellbeing, dignity and comfort, the ICV scheme manager followed up with Custody Medical Services Advisor. On alerting the staff member to the issue, it was fully resolved within 24 hours and the following feedback received: *“I will keep you in the loop although your reports are invaluable and a great source of quality and service information for me”*.
- Legal Advice – Solicitors were sometimes not responding promptly when an interview was requested due to a reluctance to enter the suite due to Covid. This has regularly been monitored by ICVs and support offered to the custody teams from the PCC when appropriate.
- Strip Searches – concerns have been raised nationally around the number of detainees being strip searched. This has proactively been addressed on all custody visits with ICVs examining this area of the custody record and feeding back where necessary. It was also the first topic of discussion at the newly established custody scrutiny panel (see below) and all ICVs are receiving additional training on the legalities surrounding this in the first quarter of 2021/22.

ICVs also very regularly comment on the exceptionally good care being given by custody staff to detainees (for example custody officers purchasing a breast pump for a breast feeding mother). They highlight the massive concern for welfare demonstrated by the staff and the desire for people to leave custody in a better position than when they arrived. The ICVs passed on their congratulation and thanks to all involved.

The overall consensus from all ICVs is that Surrey should be proud of their custody suites and the treatment it gives detainees. One ICV writes *“I am very impressed by the professional yet personable approach and high standards of care given to detainees received into Surrey Police Custody. The staff are very committed to the welfare of detainees, and do an amazing job in sometimes challenging circumstances. My observation is that the vast majority of detainees recognise and are grateful for these efforts too, which makes the experience the best and calmest possible for them in the circumstances they find themselves.”*



When asked about the reception of the volunteers into custody by both the officers and detainee, all responders commented positively which is essential to a smooth running, successful scheme. *“As an ICV, I enjoy being part of a friendly and supportive team with this responsibility, the growing familiarity with the operations of the custody suite and meeting both the custody officers and the detainees. It is very rewarding to know that a conversation with a detainee at a stressful time in their lives may have made a difference to his/her experience in custody, even if no issues need to be resolved, but more if so. It is satisfying to be able to pick up on any issues and to know that these will be addressed with respect to a particular detainee or more generally within the custody suite.”*

2020/21 has obviously had its challenges, but despite the volunteers and custody officers having to switch between 2 different methods of custody visiting (often at the last minute), one ICV comments: *“I think the oversight calls went extremely well when we couldn't visit in person. I have always been enormously impressed by the good relationship between Custody staff and ICVs, even when their extra busy routine, because of Covid, was "interrupted" by a phone call from us”.*

## Training & Other Events

The best custody visiting schemes have the best trained custody visitors and we take our responsibility in keeping our ICVs updated on changes in the custody environment relevant to their role very seriously.

Due to the pandemic, the Annual Training Day was cancelled. But as an alternative training was offered during the panel meetings (on subjects such as strip searching) and Surrey regularly utilised

direct to ICV training produced by ICVA to maintain volunteer enthusiasm and commitment. Additionally national online conferences were attended on both Appropriate Adults and Racism and Diversity.



## Regional Collaboration and ICVA

The South East Regional ICV Scheme Managers (Hampshire, Sussex, Surrey, Kent and Thames Valley) exchange information and meet on a six-monthly basis in order to bench-mark the Schemes and share information and best practice.

The Surrey ICV Scheme continues to be an active member of the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) and Erika, Surrey's ICV Scheme Manager became an ICVA Director during 2020 . ICVA provides access to training for ICVs at all levels as well as support and reference for the Scheme Manager.

## Looking Ahead

ICVs continually report on a well-run custody who value their visits, however challenges and opportunities continue to exist. The 4 key priorities for Surrey's ICV Scheme as we enter 2021/22 are as follows:

- Covid-19 Recovery – whilst the Covid situation appears to be easing within the UK, it is still too early to relax, everyone has a different interpretation of the situation and vaccinations ongoing. Over the next few months the transition back to full time, in person physical visiting must be managed, but even after this attention must be continued to be paid to the national situation to ensure volunteer's wellbeing and minimising the impact on custody.
- Supporting Custody Scrutiny Panel – Surrey Police have newly established a custody scrutiny panel in line with the level of scrutiny shown to other areas in the force. This brings together a range of interested parties, with the ICVs playing a critical role in these meetings and the oversight they provide.
- Electronic Reporting – To date all reporting done by ICVs is paper based and handwritten. During the next 12 months the intention is to move to an electronic online system which will allow for greater data capture and interrogation by the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner and make the reporting process easier for ICVs.
- Ethnicity Capture – Surrey and Sussex Criminal Justice Partnerships have formed a working group to proactively build upon the findings of the Lammy Review (2017) and the Cabinet Office Race Disparity Audit (2017). Their aim is to identify if there is fairness and equality across the criminal justice system whilst also looking for disparity. It had been hoped that ICVs would tracking the ethnicity of detainees and report on it quarterly in 2020/21, but due to the mixed nature of visiting comprehensive tracking has been unable to happen. The intention is this now will happen in the coming 12 months.

## Volunteer & Make a Difference

If you are interested in finding out more about Independent Custody Visiting, please contact us. We would like to hear from you if you:-

- Are over 18
- Live, work or study within the Surrey Police borders
- Are able to communicate well with a diverse range of people
- Are able to work as part of a team
- Are flexible and reliable
- Are a good listener
- Are objective and non-judgemental
- Are able to maintain confidentiality
- Have lived in the UK for the past three years

An application pack can be downloaded from our website at

<http://www.surrey-pcc.gov.uk/independent-custody-visiting/>

A hard copy of the application pack can be requested from this office.

## Contact Details

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