

# Independent Custody Visiting Scheme

Annual Report  
April 2022 – March 2023



OFFICE OF THE POLICE &  
CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR  
**SURREY**

# Foreword from Police and Crime Commissioner Lisa Townsend

I am really pleased to present the Independent Custody Visiting Annual Report for 2022/23.

Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) carry out an essential role by checking on the welfare and fair treatment of individuals in custody. They play a vital part in maintaining the high standards that we expect of Surrey Police.

Custody is a busy part of daily policing that is often hidden from the public view and perception of what our officers and staff do.

I am incredibly grateful to each of the 44 volunteers who together made 172 unannounced visits and spent over 400 hours in custody suites across Surrey in the last year.

They are vital in ensuring that we not only protect individuals with a wide range of needs and backgrounds from harm, but that we also support the welfare of custody officers and staff.

By shining a spotlight on the processes, people and environments within custody, their recommendations cover everything from ensuring that there are enough blankets in winter, to safeguarding someone who is experiencing a mental health crisis.

The impartial and relaxed approach of ICVs can have an immediate effect in reducing the impact that being detained can have on any individual, including children and other individuals who are especially vulnerable.

By speaking to an Independent Custody Visitor, they can raise concerns that might not be otherwise recorded. These are then shared with senior offices to learn and make changes where needed.



At a time when policing is under intense public scrutiny, the ICV Scheme is a valuable part of the work of my office to champion transparency and hold the Chief Constable to account.

This is only made possible by the passion invested in the scheme by every one of our volunteers, and by the ICV Scheme Manager Erika Dallinger.

I would like to thank them all for their continued service and commitment.

I look forward to meeting the volunteers again over the next year and continuing the support my office provides for the scheme in Surrey.



Lisa Townsend

**Lisa Townsend**

Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey

## 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 who has authority for running and maintaining the scheme in their force area.

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 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 reviews”*. Another volunteer adds: *“ICVs are critical friend to the custody staff as well as providing support to the detainees by checking on their welfare”*.



## 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.

During a routine custody visit 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.

ICVs look, listen, observe and at the end of each visit, report back to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner on their findings. The Commissioner takes any issues raised seriously and highlights them to Surrey Police in the appropriate way, keeping ICVs informed of feedback and actions agreed.

# Recruitment & Demographics

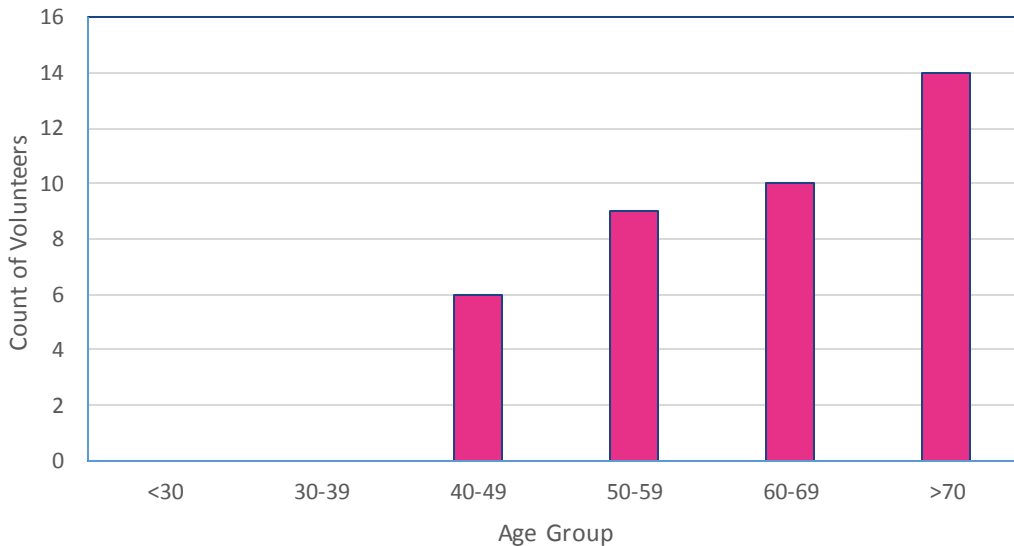
ICVs are independent volunteers and must have no direct involvement in the criminal justice system. They come from a variety of backgrounds, must be over 18 and live or work within the Surrey Police area. During 2022/23, 44 people volunteered their time to the scheme, with 39 active Independent Custody Visitors working within Surrey at the end of the year.

Exploring the composition of the volunteer team at the end of the reporting period shows the following:

- Our volunteers are 61% female, 39% 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 62. (Full details on the age breakdown are indicated in the bar chart).
- The average length of service is slightly under 6 years with over 200 years of combined service. 51% have completed over 5 years of service, with our longest serving member having over 27 years of experience.
- 8% of all volunteers come from a known BME or Non-British background.
- Over the last year, 11 volunteers moved on from the scheme and we recruited 6 new ICVs.
- Over the last year, the male/female ratio has become more female dominated, but the average age has reduced by 1 year.

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## Age Spread of ICV Volunteers



# Routine ICV Visits

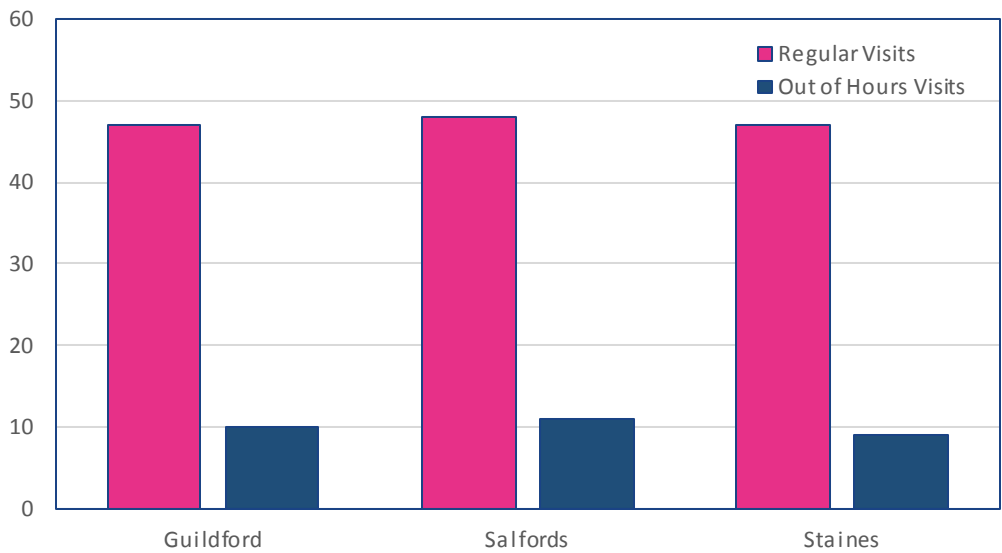
Visits provide a snapshot of what is going on in custody at the time of the visit and are undertaken across all days of the week and on a 24-hour basis. Each ICV Panel aims to complete one regular weekly visit between the hours of 6am and 11pm and one monthly 'out of hours' (OOH) visit (between 11pm 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 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, the following can be established:

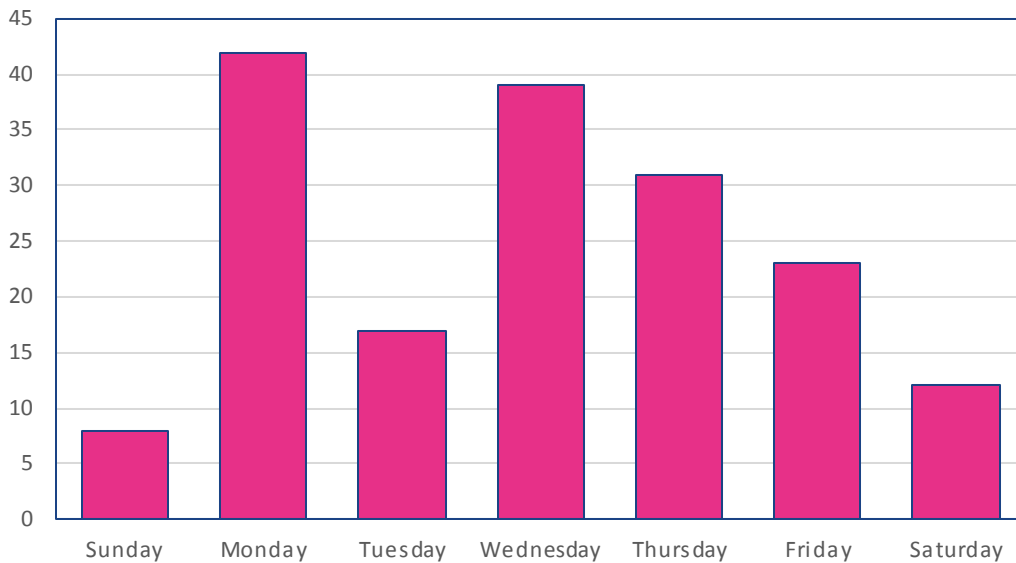
- Surrey's ICVs conducted a total of 172 unannounced, random visits across Surrey's custody suites – this is now fully back to pre-covid visiting frequencies.
- Surrey ICVs spent approximately 404 hours monitoring custody during the year.
- Visits were spread over the entire week and hours of the day, thus helping keep ICV visits unpredictable. However, weekend visits are still considerably less frequent across the estate than weekday visits due to availability of volunteers.
- The average visit lasted 2 hour 32 minutes, a significant increase year on year caused by the introduction of electronic ICV reporting which required adjusting to.

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### ICV Visit Statistics



### Spread of ICV Visits by Day



## ICV & Welfare Checks

During the 2022/23 reporting year, a total of 11,506 people were held in Surrey custody centres, which was an increase of 4.7% from the previous year but down 0.9% from figures immediately pre covid. At the time of the ICV visits a total of 960 detainees were in custody (8.3% of overall annual custody population). This sample size is significantly increased from the previous reporting year due to covid recovery (+48%). Of these 960 people:

- 736 detainees were randomly selected by ICVs for welfare checking during their visit. The remaining 224 were not selected due to time pressures for completing the visit.
- Of these 736 detainees, 433 or 59% were available to the ICVs. The remaining 41% 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 where a visit could significantly harm a volunteer, an officer or the detainee themselves.
- 387 of the 433 (89%) available detainees when asked by ICVs if they were willing to discuss their treatment in police custody agreed to do so.
- 35 detainees whilst declining a custody volunteer 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.
- Only 11 detainees refused both the opportunity to talk to an ICV and for them to review their custody records.
- 57 (8%) detainees in custody at the time of ICV visit were children or young people and 16% were female.

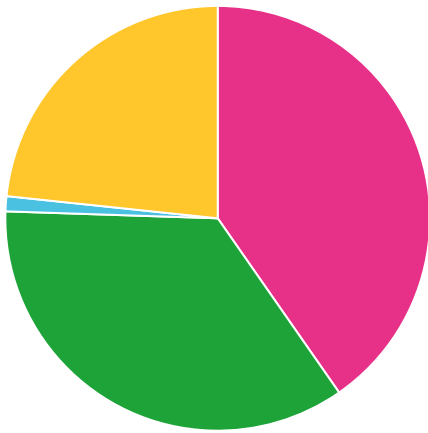
### ICV Interaction with Detainees

	<b>Surrey Wide 2022-23 Performance</b>	<b>Guildford</b>	<b>Salfords</b>	<b>Staines</b>
<b>Number of detainees in custody during ICV visits</b>	<b>960</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>335</b>
Number of detainees interviewed by ICVs	<b>387</b>	140	134	113
Number of detainees refusing both interview & records check	<b>11</b>	3	4	4
Number of detainees where an interview wasn't possible	<b>303</b>	74	88	141
Number of detainee refusing ICV interview but accepting records check	<b>35</b>	12	7	16
Number of records checked where a detainee was not interviewed	<b>338</b>	86	95	157
Number not selected for sampling	<b>224</b>	124	39	61
<b>Number of detainees receiving some form of direct welfare check by an ICV</b>	<b>725</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>270</b>

During visits, Surrey ICVs assume access to the anonymised custody records of detainees who are not available to them in order to have an overview of the welfare and treatment of as many detainees as possible (303 during this reporting period). Taking this into account, ICVs had some form of direct welfare access to 725 of the detainees in custody at the time of their visit. This amounts to 76% of detainees in custody during an ICV visit or over 6% of the entire custody population.



### ICV Engagement with Detainees



- Detainees interviewed by an ICV
- Detainees who refused or were unavailable for interview, but where ICVs checked their custody record
- Detainees explicitly refusing any ICV interaction

These are felt to be hugely positive results, showing that detainees are happy to engage with ICVs and in turn ICVs can check on the welfare of a significant proportion of detainees in custody on behalf of their local community and the Police and Crime Commissioner. This is largely due to the professionalism and flexibility of the volunteers and the police's continued commitment to and support of the scheme.

## 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, monitored, and resolved concerns around issues such as:

- Shortages of Criminal Justice Liaison and Diversion Service (CJLDS) Staff – The CJLDS team within custody, which is provided by NHS England, supports detainees with health and social vulnerabilities that may be contributing to a person's ill-health or increased contact with the criminal justice system. Optimum staffing is a dedicated CJLDS worker in each suite 12 hours a day, 7 days a week. Due to staff shortages the cover within the suites had not been at this level and there was a fear by the volunteers that some detainees would leave custody without the help they potentially needed. Whilst rectifying this situation is not within the gift of the ICVs or the Police Commissioner, the situation was closely monitored to ensure detainees were being directed to help when necessary. At the end of the reporting period, it is pleasing to report that levels are back to expected in each suite.

- Strip Searching – Following high profile news stories of inappropriate strip searches of detainees (elsewhere in the UK), ICVs have kept a proactive eye on the record keeping relating to such searches within Surrey. Several occasions have resulted in ICVs feeding back that the rationale for the search was not accurately reported or lacking in detail on the police systems, despite conversations with custody officers verbally demonstrating good adherence to law. In each case this has been followed up with the relevant Inspector and appropriate feedback given. ICVs have also received full training on the law behind strip searches so they can fully understand where they should be used.
- Delays in Detainees Accessing Their Rights – ICVs highlighted several occurrences where detainees had experienced delays in accessing things they were entitled to under the Police & Criminal Evidence Act, particularly access to appropriate adults (AAs). ICVs will always feedback during the visit when they witness such delays, but the report form the ICVs now complete explicitly asks for the length of time between requesting an AA and one arriving – this way any issues can be quantified and followed up as appropriate. (This is no reflection on Surrey Appropriate Adult Service who always promptly supply AAs when necessary, more an issue with family members providing AA support).

ICVs also continue to regularly comment on the exceptionally good care being given by custody staff to detainees. 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. One ICV commented *“It is amazing how many times, during chats, even if they [the detainee] are not happy to be where they are, detainees still bother to mention how well they are treated”*. Another stated *“I continue to be impressed with the professionalism shown by the custody team – not only in their interactions with the detainees, but with us [the ICVs] too”*.

## Electronic Reporting

One of the most significant changes to the administration of the scheme during 2022-23 was the move from ICVs completing paper based reports by hand to an electronic reporting system. This move, whilst requiring significant adjustments by the volunteers, when fully embedded will allow for higher levels of data capture (which will be of great use to both the PCC and Surrey Police) and give the scheme the ability to dynamically change questions to reflect current circumstances, trends or issues.

## 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.

In addition to the quarterly panel meetings which provide a networking and training opportunity, regular standalone training sessions were offered in 2022/3. These included a full day conference in November 2022

where both internal and an external providers delivered sessions on modern slavery and human trafficking, Surrey Appropriate Adults and health care in custody.

Additionally national ICV training resources were used and both ICVA's Scheme Manager and Volunteer conferences were attended.



## Regional Collaboration and ICVA

The South-East Regional ICV Scheme Managers (Hampshire, Sussex, Surrey, Kent and Thames Valley) exchange information and share best practice on an informal basis.

The Surrey ICV Scheme continues to be an active member of the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) and Erika, Surrey's ICV Scheme Manager remained as a Director of ICVA during 2022-23. 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 2 key priorities for Surrey's ICV Scheme as we enter 2023/24 are as follows:

- Supporting Custody Scrutiny Panel – Surrey Police have 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. This panel is still establishing itself and ICVs can play a key role in the further scrutiny of this area.
- Electronic Reporting – With electronic reporting successfully introduced by the end of 2022/23, the forthcoming year will see a period of embedding practices, making it business as normal and utilising the benefits it offers (such as greater data capture).

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In addition to these, ICVs remain committed to a continued focus on supporting custody with issues such as:

- The communication of Rights and Entitlements to the detainee – by feeding back and following up when issues are spotted, ICVs have the power to impact a detainees stay within custody.
- The precision of records on the computer system – It is essential this record is a thorough and accurate reflection of a detainees stay in custody as detainee care can directly impact investigation proceedings as well as contravening the law. Anybody reading these records should be left in no doubt what happened during a detainees stay and why. ICVs are well placed to pick up on issues where these 'whys' (the rationale behind decisions) are not being recorded thoroughly.
- Suite Maintenance – ICVs continue to monitor issues such as cleaning (ensuring cells are cleared of food debris during a detainees stay), quality of food offering offered and availability of religious material.

## 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
- Can communicate well with a diverse range of people
- Can work as part of a team
- Are flexible and reliable

- Are a good listener
- Are objective and non-judgemental
- Can 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/>

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