



Independent

Custody Visitors

2025/6 Annual Report



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Forward

Chris Nelson

I am pleased to present this Annual Report highlighting the vital work of our Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) in Gloucestershire.

Independent custody visiting is an essential element of the work of my Office, ensuring the police service is open and accountable to the people it serves.

The Independent Custody Visiting Scheme gives the public a real insight into conditions in custody and provides reassurance that someone independent of the Police has oversight of this vital service. This statutory scheme cannot exist without the commitment of volunteers.

Police custody remains a challenging and dynamic environment with many of the county's most vulnerable people passing through its doors. The public rightly expects officers to act with integrity and impartiality and to treat detainees fairly, professionally and according to their individual needs. This is why it is vital that we have independent visitors to ensure the high standard of detainee welfare is maintained.

I would like to thank all the ICVs for their continued time, dedication and perseverance to this noble scheme, providing that vital independent oversight of detainees' welfare and conditions in custody.



Background

& Introduction

Until the publication of the Scarman Report following the Brixton Riots in 1981, no provision existed for the independent monitoring of the welfare of detainees held in police custody. Lord Scarman recommended that provision be made for random checks by people other than police officers on the interrogation and detention of suspects in police stations. The aim of this was to promote public confidence in policing, ensuring all policing activity was accessible and transparent to scrutiny by the public.

Initially, Independent Custody Visiting was voluntary for Police Authorities, however, in 2002 it became a statutory provision under the Police and Crime Act 2002, with the Home Office introducing the 'Codes of Practice for Independent Custody Visiting' (annex one). The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 introduced Police and Crime Commissioners and gave them the responsibility for operating and overseeing a scheme in their police area.

Independent Custody Visitor (ICV) schemes exist to provide assurance to local communities so that they can have confidence in the way the police treat people who are held in their custody.

As Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Gloucestershire, Chris Nelson must ensure that robust and effective procedures for establishing and maintaining the scheme are in place.

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) recruits volunteer ICVs to undertake the role and provides them with support and on-going training to ensure that they can carry out their role effectively.

The scheme plays an important part in maintaining police accountability to the local community, and the aim of this annual report is to ensure that this information is available in the public domain.

Compass house is Gloucestershire's purpose-built custody suite located in Waterwells. The building has been carefully designed around the custody process, and has the custody charge area centrally located, allowing line of sight down the wings comprising of 50 cells and 10 holding cells. It also encompasses two van docks, a secure compound and staff / visitor parking.

From **April 2025 until March 2026**, Compass House saw **9494** detainees; **574** of these were children and young people aged 17 and under.

How does the Scheme Work?



ICVs visiting the Custody Suite

Visits are random, unannounced and can take place at any time of the day or night.

With the consent of detainees, ICVs enter police cells and speak to detainees being held.

Conversations with detainees focus on welfare needs and the provision of rights and entitlements under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE).

With permission, ICVs can review a detainee's custody record to ensure that the detainee has been treated appropriately.



Holding to Account

If ICVs notice any issues, they will write this in their report at the end of the visit. The ICV scheme manager will then raise this with the Chief Inspector for a response.

If they do not receive a satisfactory response, then the PCC will raise the issue as a form of holding to account with the Chief Constable.



Custody Record Reviews

Custody Records are randomly selected and reviewed by ICVs in order to ensure that the detainee has been looked after throughout their time in custody.

The ICVs will look at randomly selected records and provide feedback via a survey to

The scheme manager.

Independent Custody Visiting is supported nationally by the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA). This is a voluntary organisation that promotes the custody visiting process nationally through advocacy, training, publicity and ongoing support to all involved in the process. Ultimately, it aims to assist in the formulation of best practice for custody visiting schemes, increasing public awareness and understanding.

Volunteer and OPCC

Activity Overview

The last year has been a very busy year for the ICVs with many extra activities and additional volunteering on offer alongside the regular visiting.

At the beginning of the year, two of the volunteers were featured on a mini-series on BBC radio Gloucestershire. The series focused on neurodiversity in custody and the ICVs were able to use the opportunity to promote the work of the ICVs to other members of the public through a staged visit. The ICVs also took part in the HMIC Mock inspection of custody. This mock inspection ran over a week and ICVs interviewed detainees, observe custody staff and inspect the estates. This provided ICVs with an opportunity to see areas of custody they usually wouldn't spend as much time in.

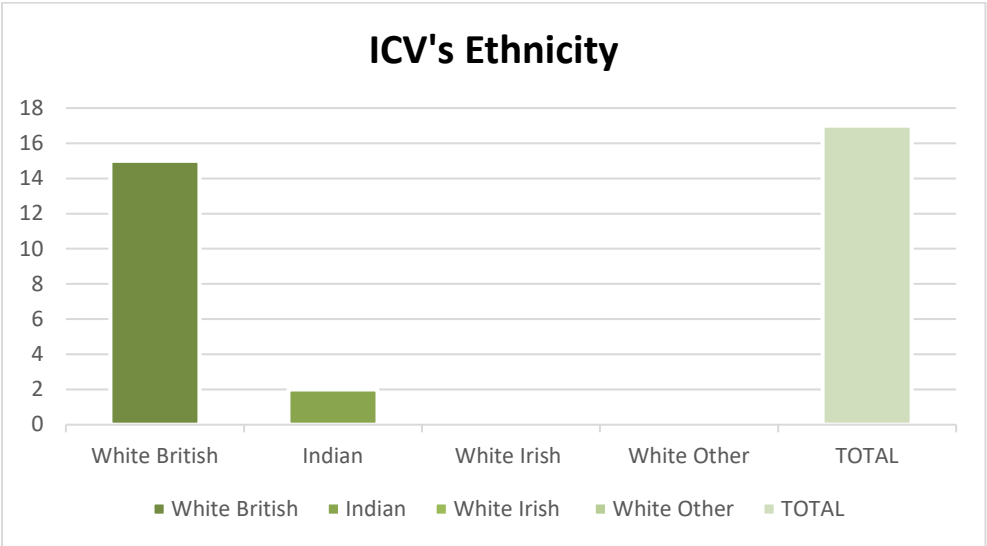
The last year was also the first year running the custody strip search panel which focuses on children who have been strip searched and enables oversight of such a sensitive area of policing. The ICVs have also started the newer Use of Force in custody scrutiny panel which is hoping to have a similar impact as it continues.

Gloucestershire alongside Dorset ICV scheme were also pleased to host and organise the Southwest ICV conference. This event was the first in many years and included speakers from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) , National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) and a workshop session for volunteers where visiting practices were discussed. This event proved highly successful and will continue on an annual basis.

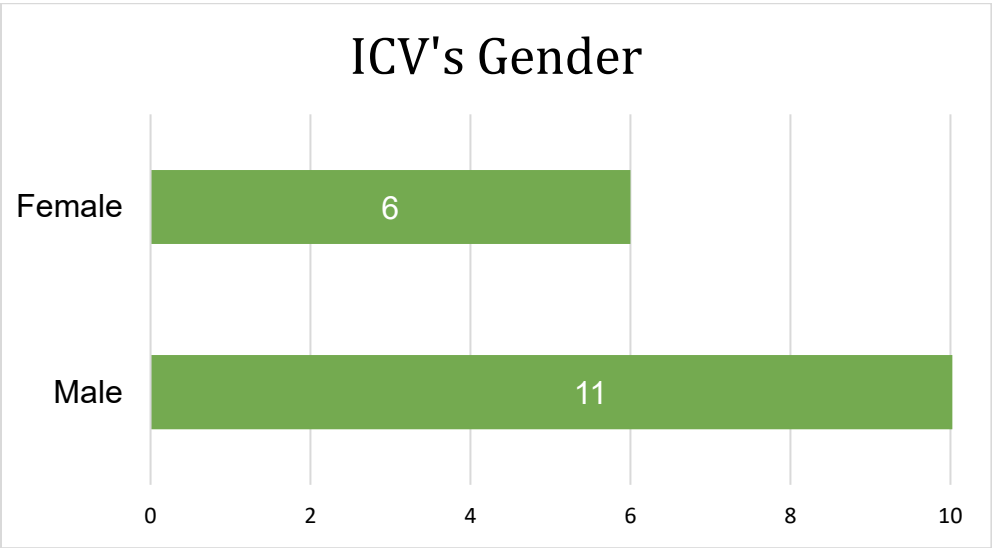
The ICV scheme also took part in the quality assurance framework with ICVA one of only 10 in the country. The quality assurance framework is managed by ICVA and aims to scrutinise the work of the scheme and to enable scheme managers to ensure that their scheme is best practice. This year's framework included an extra level of scrutiny against the scheme with the addition of the area of 'Volunteer Voices' and additional requests for supportive evidence from across all areas. Gloucestershire's ICV scheme came out with the highest award of platinum and is one of only 10 schemes across the UK who achieved this award.

Gloucestershire ICVs are exceptionally dedicated volunteers and the OPCC cannot thank them enough for all their time, support and compassion for vulnerable people.

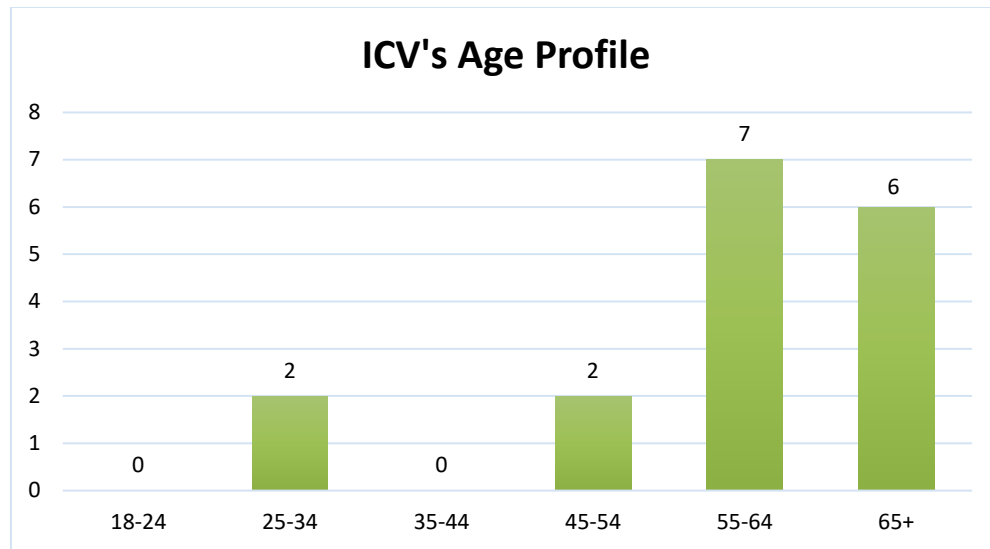
Gloucestershire's ICVs



Within the Gloucestershire ICVs the majority identify themselves as from white British backgrounds (88.3%) and then two members identify themselves as Indian (11.7%). Comparing as a percentage we have a demographically similar number of White British ICVs as the population and higher representative group from an Indian background (2.9%). However, the scheme are clearly missing members of other communities who make up Gloucestershire such as the black community (1.2%), mixed or multiple ethnic background (2.25) and Gypsy and Irish Traveler communities (0.1%).



The current gender makeup of the ICVs is six female and 11 male which works out as 35% of ICVs are female and 65% are male. In comparison to the Gloucestershire census data females are underrepresented (51.1% Female and 48.9% Male).



The age profile of Gloucestershire is 23.1% ages zero to 19, 58.4% 20 to 64 and 18.5% 65+. In comparison to ICVs in Gloucestershire there are currently no volunteers under the age of 19, 65% between 20 to 64 and 35% 65+. Which shows an over representation of those between 20 to 64 years old and under representation of those 65+. The graph above shows we are missing a key age category of 18 to 24 and 35 to 44.

How are we going to make volunteering more appealing to underrepresented demographics?

We will be working over the next few years to increase representation particularly females, members of the black community and young people. We will do this by increasing our presence in the communities (including community events and groups) and follow the new OPCC community strategy which focuses on reaching these underrepresented groups. We will promote the ICV scheme through the focus groups the strategy plans to implement from April as well as through the Youth advisory group and general comms throughout the year.

Activity

Overview

Custody Visits

The below table outlines the issues which have been raised over the last year (2025/26) and the responses from the Constabulary. The main issues were within estates and with staffing levels/treatment over the last year. The new Chief Inspector (as of February) was made aware of this and has implemented a weekly walk through with the estates team as well as applied for an increase in staff baseline to make a more resilient custody staff.

Issues	Constabulary response
Halal certificate is out of date	This was rectified on the visit by the scheme manager
Graffiti on walls	This has been painted over in all yard areas
Litter outside of visitor's entrance	This has been added to the cleaner's rotation
Green mould on yard floor	This was power washed.
Toilet door handle loose	This issue was rectified but has recently reoccurred so is currently with the estates team to fix.
Bulgarian national not been given his rights in Bulgarian	Custody Detention Officers (CDOs) offered to print them off when this was raised at the time in custody
DP Paved whilst in cell – curious on the policy on the use of PAVA in cells	Chief Inspector explained that though this happens rarely it is within policy guidelines that PAVA can be used in cells.
ICVs not let into custody for over an hour	An apology was provided by the Chief Inspector and Inspector on duty of custody. This occurred across the county during this quarter to 25% ICV schemes so a formal letter from the

Chairs in reception cracked	On the list of repairs for the estates team
The lack of protective garments meant that on occasions LDO would advise her team to refuse to deal with the detainee	CDOS have now been fitted for protective garments.
Often CDOS would not be able to take their lunch break as this would leave them short staffed.	This has now been rectified after going to the custody strategic board and Unison got involved. All CDOs are expected to take an hour lunch break with no exceptions now.
Issue with Health Care Professionals (HCP) cover again	No further issues reported
Graffiti on mural	Mural has been repainted with graffiti proof paint
Cleanliness of cells	There is now a regular cleaner who has made a big difference in cleanliness to the custody block
Staffing levels lower than they should be which CDOs have said has led to custody being unsafe they believe led to a near miss in the custody block	More CDOs have been hired and an application for the baseline of CDOs to increase has been made by the current chief inspector. CDOs have not reported to ICVs further on this since
Holding cell lights in three and five both not working holding cell 1 no functioning lock system	Ongoing issue as the custody block would need to replace the entire fitting rather than just replacing a bulb.
Van dock door not working	This is now fixed
No vegan and vegetarian meals	Rectified by the next visit
Lights too bright for detainee (despite being on minimum)	Fed back to the Chief Inspector we have had no further complaints from detainees
Could there be a stock of large print books be made available.	Large print textbooks are now available
Rights sheet scratched from wall	Agreed in the strategic board that the advice sheet would be re-stuck on the walls as it was minimal cost to replace

Alongside issues ICVs also feedback positive experiences they have had in the custody suite. A constant theme throughout this feedback is the professionalism of the CDOs particularly during busy periods in the custody suite.

Positive Feedback

Thank **REDACTED** and **REDACTED** for their kind assistance and cooperation throughout the

visit.
Escorting officer provided every help and assistance in the visit
CDO [REDACTED] was very very helpful – please pass on our thanks!
ICVs would like to thank [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]
escorting officer provided excellent assistance throughout
[REDACTED] was excellent showing us around, answered all our questions and followed up on checks needed – offering to work overtime to assist. Thanks so much [REDACTED]! Other checks (if carried out): N/A
CDO extremely helpful
Mural is 10/10
Officer [REDACTED] is very helpful
Detainee reported 'custody officers have been sound'
Thank you to [REDACTED] for their escorting
Several detainees compliment how well staff had treated them. 'Exceptional treatment by staff'
ICVs treated very well by staff during visiting, and detainees were very complimentary about the way they have been treated.
The DO ([REDACTED]) who showed the ICV's around was efficient and dealt with our needs and enquiries.
ICV's would like to thank [REDACTED] for his assistance during their visit.
The custody inspector also shared magnetic "flags" that can be stuck outside the cells to flag any vulnerabilities e.g., neurodivergence, diabetic, allergy, so all custody are aware. ICVs thought this was a great idea to help save time.
Staff very cooperative. Assured that medical facilities in good condition.
Temp of milk process updated. CDOs spoke very positively about new chief inspector in custody. Mentioned he was receptive to feedback and available after being in post about 2 weeks. CDOs very helpful- thanks!

Activity

Overview

Record Reviews

For the first six months of 2025/26 the ICVs took part in a custody record pilot for immigration offences. Redacted custody records were reviewed from those who were either arrested for immigration offences or their arrest was initially under PACE but was then changed to be under the Immigration Act.

Issues
Details missing from some custody records across all areas (UNIFI) But more specifically around the area of whether IS91s, clothing and blankets have been provided to detainees
Some records are missing key details such as when immigration arrived at custody and whether alternative clothing was provided
Observation changes aren't being noted (Niche)
'Incapable' is being used on signature pads so it's confusing whether a detainee is incapable or if the signature pads just aren't working

With the implementation of the new record keeping system most of the issues have been addressed. However, those issues which haven't been addressed, including the recording of whether clothing and blankets have been provided. Have been addressed by the new Chief Inspector who has spoken to the Sergeants and outlined the need to be specific within the custody records especially around noting observation changes

As well as issues the ICVs do also point out areas of good practice. This included that all detainees are being given observation levels even when not required by law. This means extra safeguarding measures for detainees and ultimately a safer custody suite. Times between arrival to compass house and detention authorisation have been generally very quick and the few times where there has been a delay there is good reason which has been noted clearly in the custody record.

Detainees

In Custody

Vulnerable Detainees

It is widely accepted within policing that there is a need to reduce the number of young and /or vulnerable people in custody. Gloucestershire Constabulary takes a positive approach to this. The aim is to release detainees from custody in a better position than they arrived, so they are better equipped to change their behaviours and lifestyle choices. Various diversion and support services are available to detainees through partnership working, such as The Nelson Trust and Youth Support Team and referrals are based upon the detainee's needs and vulnerability.

ICVs will always prioritise seeing young people, vulnerable people and females during their visits, especially when Custody is busy and they are unable to see all detainees. If a detainee is unable to be seen (asleep, advised against a visit etc.), ICVs will always strive to make a safe observation of them.

Statistics of detained people in custody 2023/24

Within the year beginning April 2025 there were a total of **9494** detainees in compass house with a daily average of **26.01** detainees. Please do note where the tables say 'unknown' or 'not stated' this is where a detainee has not provided their ethnicity which it is within their rights.

Gender of detainees

Gender	Number of Detainees	Percentages
Male	7755	81.7%
Female	1733	18.3%
Other	6	0.06%
Total	9494	

Ethnicity of detainees

Ethnicity	Number of Detainees	Percentage	Percentage of ethnicity in Gloucestershire (according to 2021 census)
Asian	308	3.2%	3.2%
Black	600	6.3%	1.3%
Other	173	1.8%	0.8%
Mixed	296	3.1%	2.3%
Not Stated	310	3.2%	N/A
Unknown	343	3.6%	N/A
White	7464	78.6%	92.5
Total	9494		N/A

Children in CustodyChildren's gender in custody

Gender	Number of Child Detainees	Percentages
Female	130	20.10%
Male	443	79.72%
Other	1	0.17%
Total	574	100%

Children's ethnicity in custody

Ethnicity	Number of child Detainees	Percentage
Asian	9	2.08%
Black	35	7.63%
Other	3	0.35%
Mixed	28	3.64%

Not Stated	48	2.60%
Unknown	30	10.23%
White	421	73.48%
Total	574	100%

TACT Code H &

National Security Act

Persons detained under PACE Code H are persons who have been arrested on suspicion of being, or have been concerned in the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism or have been arrested for statutory offences as detailed in the Terrorism Act (TACT).

Persons held under PACE Code H can be detained for up to 14 days, significantly longer than those arrested under PACE Code C who can be detained for up to 96 hours without charge; and the rights and entitlements change accordingly to reflect the differing needs.

In addition to TACT Code H, the National Security Act 2023 allows police to detain without charge individuals suspected of being involved in foreign power threat activity for up to 48 hours initially. There is an additional ability for police to apply for warrants to increase this to detain the suspect for a maximum of 14 days. A new PACE Code I has been created for National Security Act detention.

There have been no TACT or National Security Act detainees between 1st April 2025 and 31st March 2026.

ICVs must hold at least 18 months service as a Code C ICV before they are able to train to undertake Code H and I Visits; to become a TACT ICV they need to undergo further vetting and receive additional specialist training.

All ICV visit report forms with those who are arrested under the National Security Act 2023 are sent to the Independent Reviewer of States Threats Legislation (IRSTL) Johnathan Hall KC. ICV reports on those arrested under PACE Code C are to be sent to the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation (IRTL) which is also held by Jonathan Hall KC.

External Bodies

Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA)

ICVA is a Home Office and Police and Crime Commissioner funded membership organisation set up to lead, support and promote local ICV schemes.

ICVA supports ICV schemes and their managers by providing effective, timely and consistent support. They ensure all schemes remain up to date in the world of policing and have the tools they need to be able to deliver effective oversight of detainees and their rights, entitlements and wellbeing.

ICVA also works closely with Government and Criminal Justice organisations to:

- Promote and support the effective provision of independent custody visiting
- To support ICVs across England and Wales in contributing, wherever possible and appropriate, initiatives to improve conditions in police custody.
- They are members of the UK National Preventive Mechanism as required by the Optional Protocol against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT).

National Preventative Mechanism (NPM)

Independent Custody Visiting forms part of the NPM the body that oversees the regulation of all detention settings within the UK. The NPM was established when the Human Rights treaty, the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT) was ratified in 2002. This is an international human rights treaty designed to strengthen the protection of people deprived of their liberty.

For more information about the National Preventative Mechanism, please visit the

dedicated website <https://www.nationalpreventivemechanism.org.uk/>