



Northamptonshire Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) Scheme

Annual Report

April 2019 – March 2020

1. An introduction to police custody in Northamptonshire

There are two Custody Centres in Northamptonshire; the Criminal Justice Centre (CJC) in Northampton and the Weekley Woods Justice Centre (WWJC) in Kettering. Both centres are modern new builds with the CJC opening in 2012 with 40 cells, and the WWJC opening in August 2017 with 22 cells.

Between 1st April 2019 and 31st March 2020, 10,863 detainees were held in both custody centres in Northamptonshire. In terms of vulnerability, 1,043 (10%) of those were under the age of 18, 4,073 (37%) had mental health issues, 1,502 (14%) required the support of an Appropriate Adult, and 991 (9%) required an interpreter.

2. Introduction to the ICV scheme

The Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner has a statutory duty to operate an effective Independent Custody Visiting Scheme in the county. The scheme allows for volunteers to visit detainees in custody to check on their welfare and that they are receiving their rights and entitlements. It offers mutual protection to detainees and Custody staff by providing independent scrutiny of the treatment of detainees and the conditions they are being held in.

The success of the scheme is due to the ongoing commitment of the volunteer Independent Custody Visitors, and the Northamptonshire Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner would like to thank them for their hard work and dedication.

There are currently 20 ICV volunteers in the Northamptonshire scheme. 10 of those visit detainees held at the CJC and 10 visit detainees held at the WWJC. ICVs always visit in pairs, and they visit each Custody centre once a week.

The group of volunteers is 60% female, 40% male, ages range from 19 to 80 years old, from a range of backgrounds.

Following a recruitment campaign and application process, seven new ICVs joined the scheme in June 2019 once completing a training programme.

In the last 12 months, ICVs have volunteered over 500 hours; speaking to detainees in custody, looking at custody records, liaising with custody staff, training and attending meetings to feed back and share experiences.

3. Governance of the scheme

Issues and praise raised by ICVs are fed back to the Scheme Manager in the PFCCs office via an electronic report form

- Smaller issues are resolved by staff on duty at the time of visit
- Issues that ICVs could not resolve within the visit are escalated to the Custody Inspector to resolve
- Thematic and serious issues are raised by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner with the Chief Constable or senior staff in Northamptonshire Police
- Issues are shared with the Regional ICV Managers network and the National Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA).

ICVs, the Scheme Manager and the Custody Inspector come together every three months at a Panel meeting to discuss findings and provide updates.

4. Independent Custody Visiting Data

Between 1st April 2019 and 31st March 2020, ICVs carried out a total of 94 custody visits. Of the 568 detainees in custody at the time of their visits, ICVs spoke to 288 detainees and checked 270 custody records.

245 detainees were not available to receive a visit (they were either in interview, asleep, intoxicated, seeing the Doctor or their Solicitor) and 38 refused a visit when offered. Of the detainees available to receive a visit, 89% were seen.

5. ICV scheme findings

Between 1st April 2019 and 31st March 2020, 12% of the total number of issues raised related to detainees requesting/awaiting a drink, 10% related to detainees requesting or awaiting medication, 9% related to detainees requesting or awaiting a phone call, 7% related to communication issues and 7% related to detainees requesting or awaiting legal advice/solicitor.

Examples of where ICVs have effected change in the last 12 months include resolving issues with intercoms in cells and improving health and safety in the food preparation area.

In response to national issues, ICVs now ask a further question to female detainees relating to menstrual care.

6. Other areas of note / special events

The Northamptonshire ICV Scheme attained a Silver level in ICVA's Quality Assurance Framework (QAF), which was presented to the Scheme Manger at the House of Lords in May 2019. The QAF is a tool for schemes to ensure consistency across the board and look at areas where improvements can be made.

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner hosted a thank you event for ICVs to celebrate the award and success of the scheme.

Thank you events are held throughout the year. ICVs gathered at an event in the festive period where the PFCC thanked ICVs for their exceptional contribution to volunteering.

Training for ICVs is continuous. New ICVs undertook Induction training and ICVs have observed 'Police use of force' training sessions throughout the year. Guest speakers present at each ICV Panel meeting to ensure ICVs have a general understanding of the wider Criminal Justice System.

7. Future Plans

Northamptonshire PFCC will host a Regional training event for ICVs in the East Midlands Region in 2020/2021.

A recruitment process is planned for later in the year, to meet the maximum number of 24 ICVs to allow resilience.

8. Further information and contact details

Further details about the ICV scheme can be found on the [Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner](#) website, the [Independent Custody Visiting Association](#) website and the [National Preventive Mechanism](#) website.

Any local enquiries can be directed to the OPFCC Scheme Manager alexa.daly@northantspfcc.pnn.gov.uk