

# INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING SCHEME





## Foreword

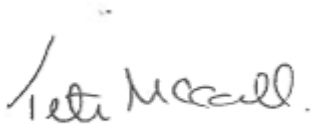
I am pleased to present our Annual Independent Custody Visiting Report for 2023.

Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) are my eyes and ears, ensuring that the rights and entitlements of any person that is detained in Cumbria are observed; and the conditions in which they are detained are satisfactory and safe. I am extremely grateful that the ICVs also check on the welfare, wellbeing and working conditions of staff, raising any concerns with the Scheme Administrator who ensures that this is acted upon appropriately by senior staff with responsibility for custody. The work carried out by volunteers and the time committed to the scheme to ensure its effectiveness is hugely appreciated not only by me, but the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner as a whole, the Constabulary and ultimately the communities of Cumbria. I would like to extend my personal thanks to each of our volunteers for their commitment to this vital role.

I am not standing for re-election to remain as Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner but I would like to put on record how very proud and grateful I am of the dedication and commitment all our volunteers have shown to the scheme.

Thank you all once again and I wish you well for the future.

Kindest regards



Peter McCall  
Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Cumbria



## Introduction & Background

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner is required by statute to operate an Independent Custody Visiting Scheme (Section 51(1) of the Police Reform Act 2002, as amended) and such a scheme operates within Cumbria. This report covers the activities of the scheme for the operating period from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023.

The Independent Custody Visiting Scheme is made up of volunteers who live or work in Cumbria. They make unannounced visits to Police Stations to check on the welfare and wellbeing of people in police custody. There are currently four panels of up to 12 volunteers each across Cumbria, in Barrow, Kendal, North and West Cumbria.



## Scheme Information

2023

### Independent Custody Visiting Scheme

Members

- West
- Kendal
- North
- Barrow



Members	Breakdown			
	members	male	female	retired
Panels				
Kendal	9	5	4	1
Barrow	10	4	6	0
North	11	2	9	3
West	8	6	2	1

## Recruitment

In early 2023, 2 new ICVs were appointed to join the North panel. Later in 2023, a new recruitment campaign was launched which received a significant number of applications from across the county. Induction training and observational visits have been arranged for May and June 2024, and we look forward to welcoming our new colleagues to the scheme in 2024 as shown below.

Thank you very much to all ICVs that have assisted throughout the recruitment process.



## Carrying out Visits

Each panel aims to undertake one unannounced visit every week to the designated police station within their area. These targets are agreed following consultation with the Chief Constable. Custody visitors are only concerned with the custodial welfare of the detainee and must always remain impartial.

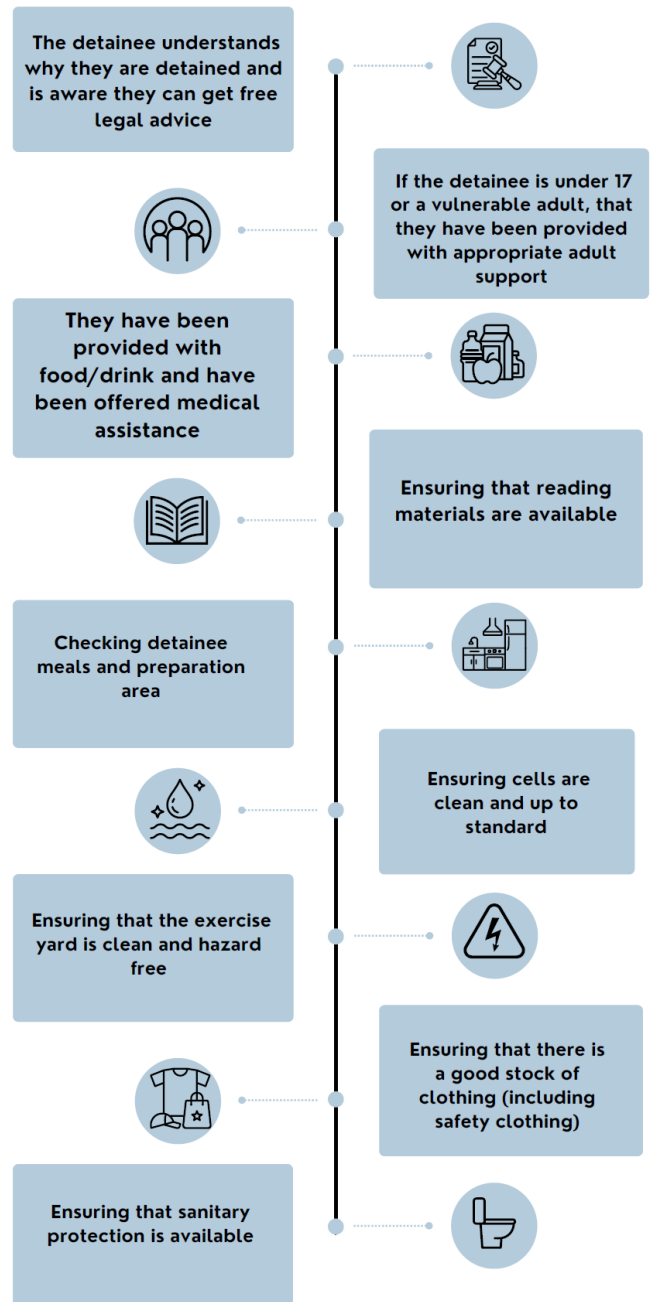
ICVs will aim to visit all detainees who are in custody at the time of the visit. There are several reasons why visitors may not see detainees including:

- The detainee may be in an interview or with an Appropriate Adult at the time of the visit
- The detainee may have been admitted to hospital or being seen by the medical practitioner within custody
- The detainee is asleep and within their continuous period of eight hours of rest
- The detainee is violent or presents a risk to the safety of the custody visitor, staff, or themselves

Wherever possible, all detainees are observed through the cell hatch if they are unable to go into the cell. Whilst the visitors must be provided with access to all detainees, detainees do not have to consent to speak with the visitors. To assist the custody visitors to speak to and interact with detainees who do not speak English, a translation booklet has been developed. The booklet provides a translation in 36 languages to enable the custody visitors to ask their questions during a visit. Also included within the book is a copy of British Sign Language to assist in interacting with any detainee who is deaf.

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## Issues Raised & Statistics

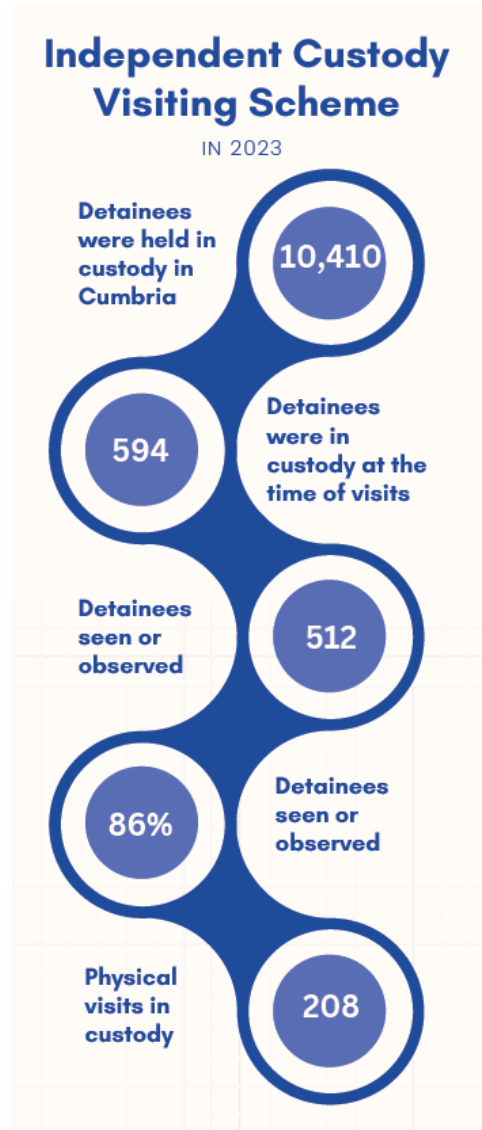
No serious issues were raised by any detainee during the visits covered by this report. Concerns that were raised generally related to estate issues, such as faults with the sinks, toilets, walls, and floors. Any significant or reoccurring issues are raised with the Constabulary and/or the Estates Department.

When issues were raised by detainees, the custody visitors discussed them with the custody sergeant during the visit. In most cases the matter could be rectified immediately. In cases where it was not, the custody visitors were satisfied that the Custody Sergeant had given a valid explanation and had the matter in hand. Should ICVs not be satisfied following an explanation from the Custody Sergeant, issues can then be raised with the Scheme Administrator to progress.

Overall, ICVs were very satisfied with the custody conditions during visits and regularly made complimentary remarks in their reports about the staff they met regarding the professional and caring attitude they observe.

Later in 2023, the Superintendent with overall responsibility for custody requested to have sight of all ICVs reports. This has assisted in ensuring that any regular or reoccurring issues are addressed appropriately and in a timely manner. All of the positive feedback that is documented on visit report forms is noted by the Constabulary and shared personally with the staff and their supervisors.

Reports, issues raised, and feedback is regularly discussed at the Custody Governance Board, of which the Scheme Administrator is a member.



## Custody Inspectors

A very positive working relationship has been formed with officers responsible for custody. Insp Hodkinson, Insp Skilling, and Inspector Smith attend the regular panel meetings for their areas and their attendance is very much appreciated by the Scheme Administrator and Custody Visitors. In addition, there is regular liaison between the Custody Inspectors and the Scheme Administrator, with the Scheme Administrator attending the Custody Governance Board on a bi-monthly basis.

- North & West – Inspector Sarah Hodkinson
- Kendal and Barrow – Inspector Lucy Skilling (replaced by Inspector Jo Smith later in 2023)
- Overall – Superintendent Matt Pearman & Chief Inspector Liz Salkeld



## Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA)

Cumbria remains a member of the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA). ICVA represents custody visiting on a national level at the Home Office and provides support to custody visiting schemes in a variety of ways, including updates, guidance on national practices, any changes to legislation and online training packages.

### ICVA Training

A training plan has been put together by the Scheme Administrator, with a training session being set and circulated approximately every 6 weeks. These sessions utilise the ICVA bitesize training packages. In 2023, the following sessions have been completed:

- Detention Clock
- Detainee Rights
- Role of the Solicitor
- Arrivals and booking in process

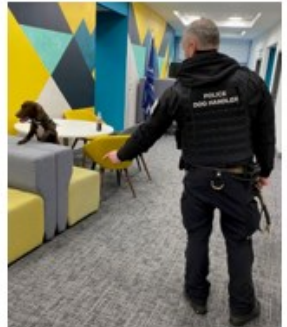


### Cumbria Conference 2023



Thank you to everyone who attended the Cumbria Annual Conference, held in September 2023.

We enjoyed demonstrations from Sgt Aidan Bew, Cumbria Dogs Section – it was fantastic to see the different types of police dogs, and their capabilities.



We were joined by Lauren Miller, Liaison & Diversion to talk about the work that they undertake in custody. Inspector Sarah Hodgkinson provided an update of work ongoing in custody, and along with Grant Ambrose, provided a demonstration of use of force techniques that ICVs may see when in custody.

## Animal Welfare Scheme

In 2006, the Animal Welfare Act brought in a responsibility for police forces to provide for the needs of police dogs. The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner also runs an Animal Welfare Scheme, although there is no statutory requirement to do so. An Animal Welfare Panel, currently made up of eight volunteers, make visits to the dog section at Police Headquarters and the Civil Nuclear Constabulary dog section kennels at Sellafield. Although the Animal Welfare visitors for CNC are the same as those for the OPFCC scheme, the CNC scheme is operated independently. Induction and ongoing training and useful information is provided throughout the year by the Dogs Trust.

The role of our Animal Welfare Scheme (AWS) Visitors is to check on the welfare of police dogs and the facilities which are provided for them. During 2023, 12 visits were carried out to each site, and there have been no welfare concerns raised regarding any of our dogs within Cumbria. Positive feedback is always received about how well the dogs are cared for. Concerns raised regarding the kennel facilities have been noted and work is currently ongoing. We hope to have an update regarding this work in the very near future.

Our AWS visitors have taken part in training exercises when 'new recruits' have been going through their passive drugs training. Some AWS visitors assisted the dog's section at Kendal Calling, where dogs were searching at entrance gates and all of our AWS visitors have completed Enrichment training in 2023 provided by The Dogs Trust.

In September 2023, Lady Bathurst, founder of the National Foundation for Retired Service Animals, took time out from her Land's End to John O'Groats charity cycle and was very pleased to meet with our AWS visitors, the Deputy Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, Dog Handlers and of course some of our Police Dogs.

Our police dogs play a vital role in helping to keep our streets safe and are valued members of Cumbria Constabulary's Policing team. The Dogs Section are grateful to our AWS visitors who give up their time to visit the kennels, ensuring that Cumbria Police dogs receive the highest level of care.





## Thank you

Thank you once again to all our visitors for another successful year of custody and animal welfare scheme visiting. Because of the time you dedicate and commit as volunteers the scheme operates successfully and without you, would not be able to operate and the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner would not fulfil his statutory duty.

We are very grateful of the work you do, and proud to have such a fantastic team of visitors.

*Lisa Hodgson*  
ICV Scheme Administrator

*Joanne Head*  
Governance Manager







Independent Custody Visiting Scheme  
Cumbria Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner  
1-2 Carleton Hall  
PENRITH  
Cumbria CA10 2AU

Telephone: 01768 217734  
E-mail: [custodyvisitors@cumbria-pcc.gov.uk](mailto:custodyvisitors@cumbria-pcc.gov.uk)  
website: [www.cumbria-pcc.gov.uk](http://www.cumbria-pcc.gov.uk)  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/cumbriapcc](http://www.facebook.com/cumbriapcc)  
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