

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING SCHEME

Foreword

I am pleased to present the Annual Independent Custody Visiting Report for 2024.

This is my first ICV Annual Report since being elected as your Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. As part of my role, I have already attended a visit in each custody suite with some ICVs. In those visits I was very impressed to observe how you carry out your role with such care and professionalism towards detainees and staff within custody. The level of scrutiny and detail was impressive.

Anyone could find themselves in custody, and I am reassured to know that the ICVs look to ensure that everyone is treated with dignity and respect and cared for appropriately when detained in Cumbria. This is an essential check and balance.

The work and time you give to the scheme is appreciated by myself, my office and the Constabulary. We are all very grateful for the effort you put into making the scheme the success that it is.

I know that some of you are also supporting the Animal Welfare Scheme and making it a great success. Although there have been some challenges with the dog kennels at Penrith, significant work has now commenced to make sure that the accommodation and facilities for police dogs are fit for purpose.

It is great to see that we have some new volunteers joining the scheme, I do intend to join visits again in the future and I am looking forward to these.

Thank you all once again.

Kindest regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Allen', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

David Allen
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 2024 to 31 December 2024.

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

2024

Independent Custody Visiting Scheme

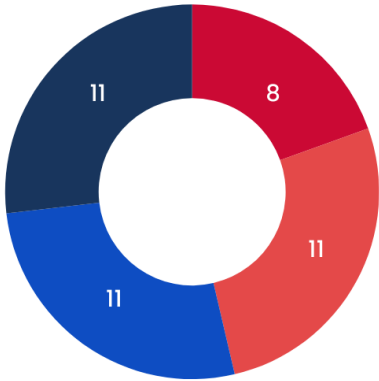
Members

West

Kendal

North

Barrow



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

Recruitment

In 2024, 9 new ICVs were appointed to join the scheme. Later in 2024, further applications were received from across the county. Induction training and observational visits have taken place in early 2025. Thank you very much to all ICVs that have assisted throughout the recruitment process.

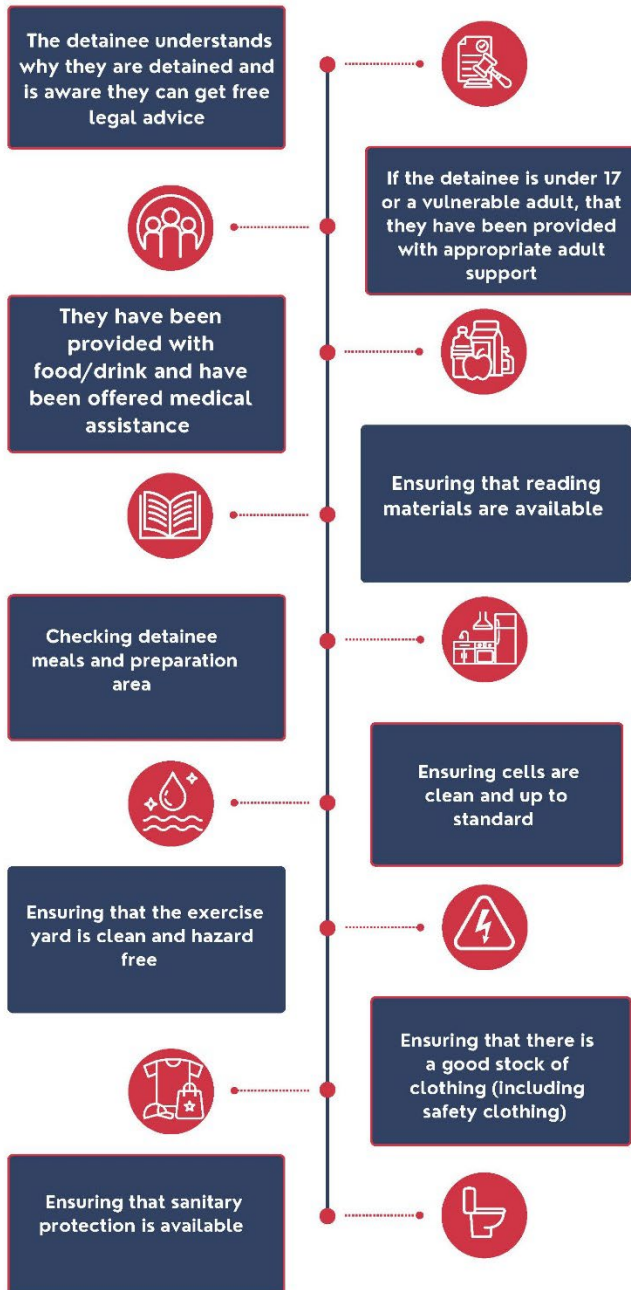
We look forward to welcoming our new colleagues to the scheme as shown below.



Carrying out Visits

WHEN SPEAKING TO DETAINEES THE

CUSTODY VISITORS WILL LOOK TO SEE IF



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 ICVs 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.



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 are 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.

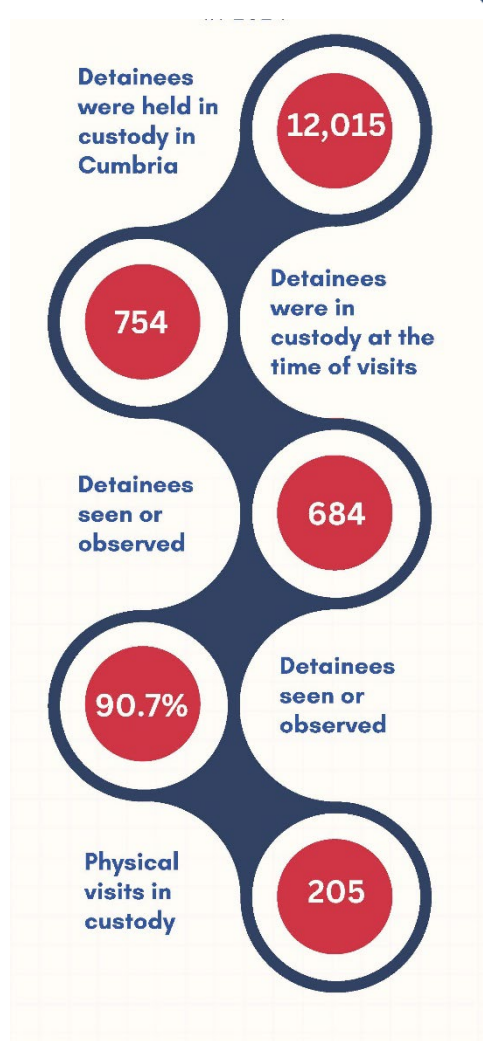
An online tracker has been created where any issues raised on visit report forms are shared directly with the office/team responsible for progressing the matter and providing updates. This has assisted in ensuring that any regular or reoccurring issues are addressed appropriately and in a timely manner. 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, (such as the concerns raised regarding meal times) and feedback are regularly discussed at the Custody Governance Board, of which the Scheme Administrator is a member.

Custody Inspectors

Inspectors with responsibility for the Custody Suites attend the 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 Nathan Greenhow
- Kendal and Barrow – Inspector Lucy Skilling
- Overall – T/Chief Superintendent Andy Wilkinson & Chief Inspector Jo Walker

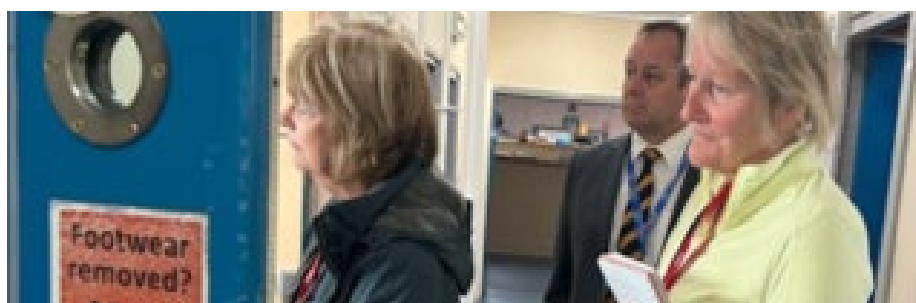


Visits with the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, David Allen attended all four custody suites in 2024 with ICVs to observe first-hand the excellent work carried out, and to see just how the custody suites in Cumbria operate.

The PFCC was impressed by the care and professionalism demonstrated by ICVs towards detainees and staff. He was reassured to know that checks and balances are in place to ensure that everyone is treated with dignity and respect and cared for appropriately when detained in Cumbria.

The PFCC intends and looks forward to joining further visits in the future.



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 2024, the following sessions have been completed:

- Suicide Awareness
- Immigration Detainees
- Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Policing Awareness Session
- Detainee Rights – Police perspective

ICVA are developing a new e-learning platform for ICVs, this will be rolled out to all ICVs during 2025.

Cumbria Conference 2024

Thank you to everyone who attended the Cumbria Annual Conference, held in September 2024.

We were joined by Dave Bates, Remedi to talk about the work that they undertake and how this links to custody. It was also useful for ICVs to be aware of what documentation is available in custody for detainees.

Vanessa De Castro, Cumbria Gateway attended to talk about the work carried out by the organisation, and how they receive and deal with referrals from Custody.

Jon Hylands, Mountain Healthcare attended to provide an overview of the organisation, and how they provide their services in custody.

Inspector Jo Smith provided an update of work ongoing in custody and scenario work regarding different observation levels within 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, ongoing training and useful information are 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 2024, 12 monthly visits were carried out to each site. Positive feedback is always received about how well the dogs are cared for. Concerns have continually been raised regarding the kennel facilities and work has commenced with improving the facilities in Penrith. A walk around the kennel facilities took place at a recent AWS meeting in order to see what work had already taken place and discuss the plans for the 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 provided by The Dogs Trust.

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. The scheme operates successfully because of the time you dedicate and commit to the scheme. Without you, we would not be able to operate, and the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner would not fulfil his statutory duty.

We are excited for the development of electronic visit form reporting and the benefits this brings to the scheme and are very much looking forward to the development of the kennel facility in Penrith.

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

