Briefing

Independent Custody Visitors

Northamptonshire is recognised nationally for the high quality of its ICV scheme with a Silver Quality Assurance award.

The volunteer Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) scheme is a statutory requirement for all Police and Crime Commissioners across the country.

The scheme sees people from the local community visit custody centres to speak to people detained by the police to ensure their welfare and fair treatment.

In Northamptonshire there are currently **24** Independent Custody Visitors aged between 18- 85, with differing backgrounds and ethnicities, aiming to make sure the scheme represents all of our communities.

Northamptonshire has two custody suites, the Weekly Woods Justice Centre in Kettering and the Criminal Justice Centre in Brackmills in Northampton. Both of these locations receive at least one unannounced Independent Custody Visit per week.

People detained in custody may be vulnerable, distressed and challenging to deal with due to complex needs such as drug and alcohol issues, mental illness or physical health problems.

Having independent people overseeing this closed area of policing can help to assure the public that people detained by the police are safeguarded and being treated in a lawful, ethical and transparent way.

104
Visits to custody

440
Detainees seen

Last year (March 2024-April 2025), the Independent Custody Visitors made **104** visits to custody and saw **440** detainees.

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How it works

Independent Custody Visitors will attend one of the custody suites to observe and report on the welfare of detainees, ensuring that they are receiving their rights and entitlements and that the conditions that they are held in are satisfactory.

Independent Custody Visitors will also speak to detainees, review custody records and check essential stocks such as food, clothing, and religious items.

The volunteers will then ask the custody staff to resolve any immediate issues and complete a visit report, which will then be used to alert the Office of Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner of their findings so any learning can be assessed and taken forward to Northamptonshire Police.

The visitors are expected to visit one of the custody suites at least once a month, and they visit in pairs.

Training and accreditation

All Independent Custody Visitors receive the same high-level of training to ensure they can effectively safeguard detainees and are all consistent in their reporting.

The volunteers will attend multiple training sessions in a year so they have the knowledge and skills to support people in custody and ensure their fair treatment.

Before becoming an ICV, all volunteers must have evidenced that they can be impartial, objective, non-judgemental and able to communicate effectively with people from a wide range of backgrounds.

The Northamptonshire ICV scheme is a member of the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA), a national organisation that leads, supports, and represents custody visiting schemes.

The association ensure that the ICV scheme is represented at national meetings with the Home Office and National Police Chiefs Council and offers policy briefings, updates, training and guidance to keep the Northamptonshire scheme in line with others across the country.

Contact the Commissioner at:

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