



 Bedfordshire
Police & Crime
Commissioner



2024-25

INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING ANNUAL REPORT

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for
Bedfordshire

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Welcome

Bedfordshire
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Police and Crime Commissioner - John Tizard

The Independent Custody Visiting scheme provides an exemplary service, demonstrated by their Platinum rating under the Quality Assurance Framework.

Scrutiny of custody services is vital for transparency, public trust and confidence, in the police service and the fantastic ICV volunteers provide the support and oversight needed for Police and Crime Commissioners to hold police services to account. They also ensure that detainees' rights are met whilst in custody.

It's important that these panels reflect the communities of Bedfordshire. Therefore, I am going to recruit more younger volunteers and others who reflect all protected characteristics, including ethnicity, gender and disability.

This annual report demonstrates the excellent work carried out by Bedfordshire's ICV volunteers.

I wish to place on record my appreciation and thanks to the volunteers who provide such an important service on behalf of the people of Bedfordshire.

Welcome

Chief Inspector and Head of Custody Jenni McIntyre-Smith



I have 21 years in policing and have served with Bedfordshire for this time. I commenced my service as a patrol officer in Bedford. I then joined Bedford tasking team as the first and only female officer. I returned to the patrol function as a Sergeant working in Bedford and parts of Central Beds.

Following being successful of the national College of Policing High Potential Scheme I made a lateral move to complete my detective training and began my journey as a Detective Sergeant in the main Counter Intelligence Department office at Bedford.

I have worked in various departments covering

- Rape investigation unit
- Managing rapes and historic cases of rape and Child Sexual Exploitation.
- I was the Senior Investigating Officer for Operation Hematite and Operation Cresta were the defendant received a 20-year sentence
- Staff officer to the then Deputy Chief Constable

Utilising my crime skills and the knowledge gained of being a staff officer I joined Professional Standards Department as a Detective Inspector leading on public complaints for the three forces, as well as being the Senior Investigating Officer for gross misconduct cases and working closely with the Independent Office of Police Complaints.

I then gained promotion to Chief Inspector just prior to Covid and was asked to take on the People Portfolio. I lead on recruitment, students, leadership, promotion pathways, retention, equality diversity and inclusion, race action plan, volunteers, specials and wellbeing.

I have now returned to where I started (well almost) and have taken up the role of head of custody, the skills I have gained working in patrol, crime, specialist crime units, force exec, national wellbeing portfolio and PSD brings a unique skill set to this role and I am very excited to bring all of this very important role.



Bedfordshire Police

Bedfordshire Police has employed roughly 1,450 Police Officers, 1,196 police staff, 40 Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and 58 Specials (volunteer police officers) as of April 2025. They also have support from multiple watch scheme groups, police support volunteers and police cadets.

Bedfordshire Police also lead joint protective services such as Armed Policing, Dogs, Roads Policing and Major Crimes for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire. They are also the lead police force for the Eastern Region Special Operations Unit.

Within Bedfordshire there are two dedicated Police Custody Suites, situated in Kempston and Luton. Combined they hold 43 cells (22 cells in Kempston and 21 cells in Luton).

Channel 4 Series: 24 Hours in Police Custody

BAFTA-nominated Channel 4 series 24 Hours in Police Custody follows Bedfordshire Police detectives around the clock to bring viewers real-life crime drama stories.

The series features a range of investigations filmed over recent years by The Garden Productions, the television company behind the programme.

It's really important that the public see the kind of work Bedfordshire Police complete and the challenges faced in Bedfordshire. [You can read more about 24 Hours in Police Custody on the Bedfordshire Police website.](#)



What is Independent Custody Visiting?



The Police and Crime Commissioner has a statutory duty to maintain an Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) Scheme for Bedfordshire. The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) manages and assists in the smooth running of the scheme, recruitment of volunteers and implements improvements to the scheme.

Independent Custody Visitors are volunteers who live, work or study in Bedfordshire. Their role is to visit custody suites to check on the welfare of those who have been detained. They ensure detainees are receiving their rights and entitlements as well as being treated fairly.

ICV recommendations can require the police to make improvements for the welfare of detainees. ICVs play a valuable role in providing the public reassurance that detainees are treated well. In addition, this scheme provides transparency and increases public confidence in police services.

How are visits conducted?

In pairs, Independent Custody Visitors will visit police custody suites unannounced at any time. The ICVs are trained to introduce themselves and with agreement, speak to detainees about their treatment whilst in custody. If the ICVs have any issues or concerns, they will raise this with the custody officer.

ICVs complete a report form which summarises their visit with each detainee. This is then forwarded to the scheme manager at the OPCC as well as the Inspectors and Chief Inspector within custody. The Inspectors, OPCC and ICV lead will meet monthly to discuss any concerns mentioned in the reports.



About the Bedfordshire Scheme



The Bedfordshire scheme consists of 28 volunteers who complete visits across the two police custody suites – Kempston and Luton. Unannounced visits occur within both suites once a week at any time of the day and on any day of the year.

During their visits, the volunteers inspect a number of different areas such as:

- the cells and toilets
- CCTV is present and working
- any medical attention or medication required has been provided
- any detainee visible injuries have been explained
- female detainee hygiene concerns are addressed
- religious materials are accessible and stored appropriately

There are four quarterly panel meetings held a year whereby volunteers receive training relating to their role. Within the past year, volunteers have been trained and had speeches by professionals on the following:

- Electronic reporting
- Acute Behavioural Disturbance (ABD)
- Mental Health within custody
- Health Care Professionals within custody



The Chief Inspector and/or Inspectors from custody as well as the Scheme Manager will provide a presentation on any updates.

ICV Scheme Lead

Stephen O'Connor

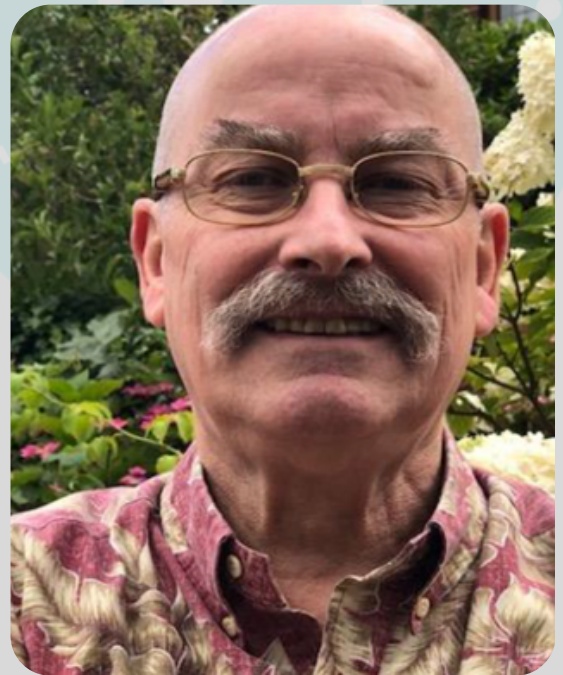
In June 2016, I saw an advert for Independent Custody Visitors, ICVs, in a world- famous newspaper, The Bedfordshire on Sunday. The role of the independent custody visitor gives the Chief Constable, Police and Crime Commissioner, PCC, and the general public confidence that detained persons are being in safety, whilst being treated with care, fairness, dignity and respect.

This voluntary role sounded interesting, different and of value to society. As a professional engineer, I am keen to support the Engineering Council's view that we must support society widely and not just in our own niche. I am pleased to be able to give back to the community though my ICV service.

I was accepted onto the ICV scheme and completed my training in August 2016. ICVs always visit the Bedfordshire custody suites at Kempston and Luton unannounced and in pairs. I carried out my 3 probationary visits with experienced ICVs with many years of service who provided sound advice and a continuing route for advice.

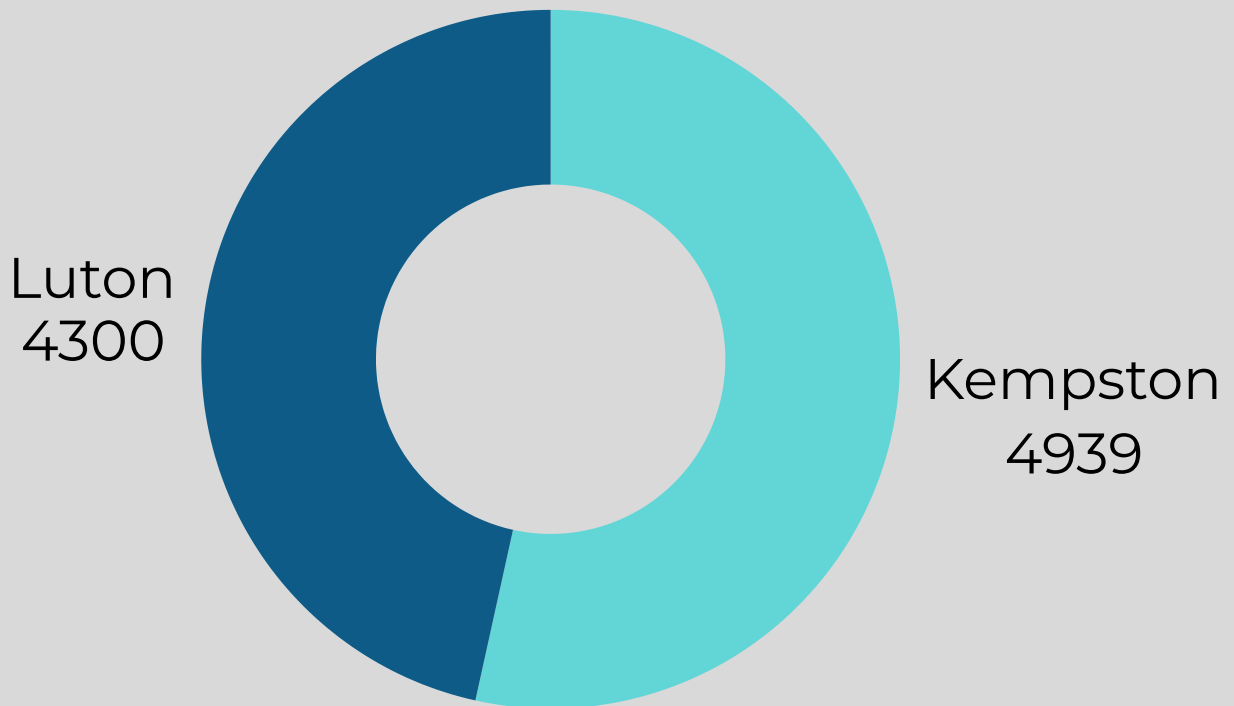
Two ICVs visit each custody suite once per week, as agreed with the Force. Custody visits take approximately 90 minutes where ICVs have discussions with detained persons, who agree to converse about their stay in custody. ICVs do not know why a person is detained. We also review the facilities, cells, fire exits and toilets, showers as well as provisions including available healthcare on site, food, beverages, blankets, replacement clothing, reading material and religious articles. ICVs check that process is followed for detained persons and provide a report, as a critical friend, following each visit to one of the custody sergeants. ICVs provide a full written report on each visit.

The ICV scheme is a statutory role for the Police and Crime Commissioner. It is vital that the monitoring of detained persons and their facilities is carried out independently, as mandated by the Scarman report following the Brixton riots in 1981. The ideal ICV membership is one that is fully representative of the community that it serves in terms of ethnicity, diversity and inclusivity.



Custody and Scheme Statistics

April 2024 - March 2025



Total amount of Bedfordshire detainees in Police Custody:

9239

(This does not include the number of Hertfordshire (Herts) detainees who were transferred to Bedfordshire Police custody, whilst Herts were closed for a refurbishment. In addition, there may be a slight increase in the amount of detainees in Kempston as a result of the Luton custody closure).

72

ICV visits to Bedfordshire Police Custody Suites

508

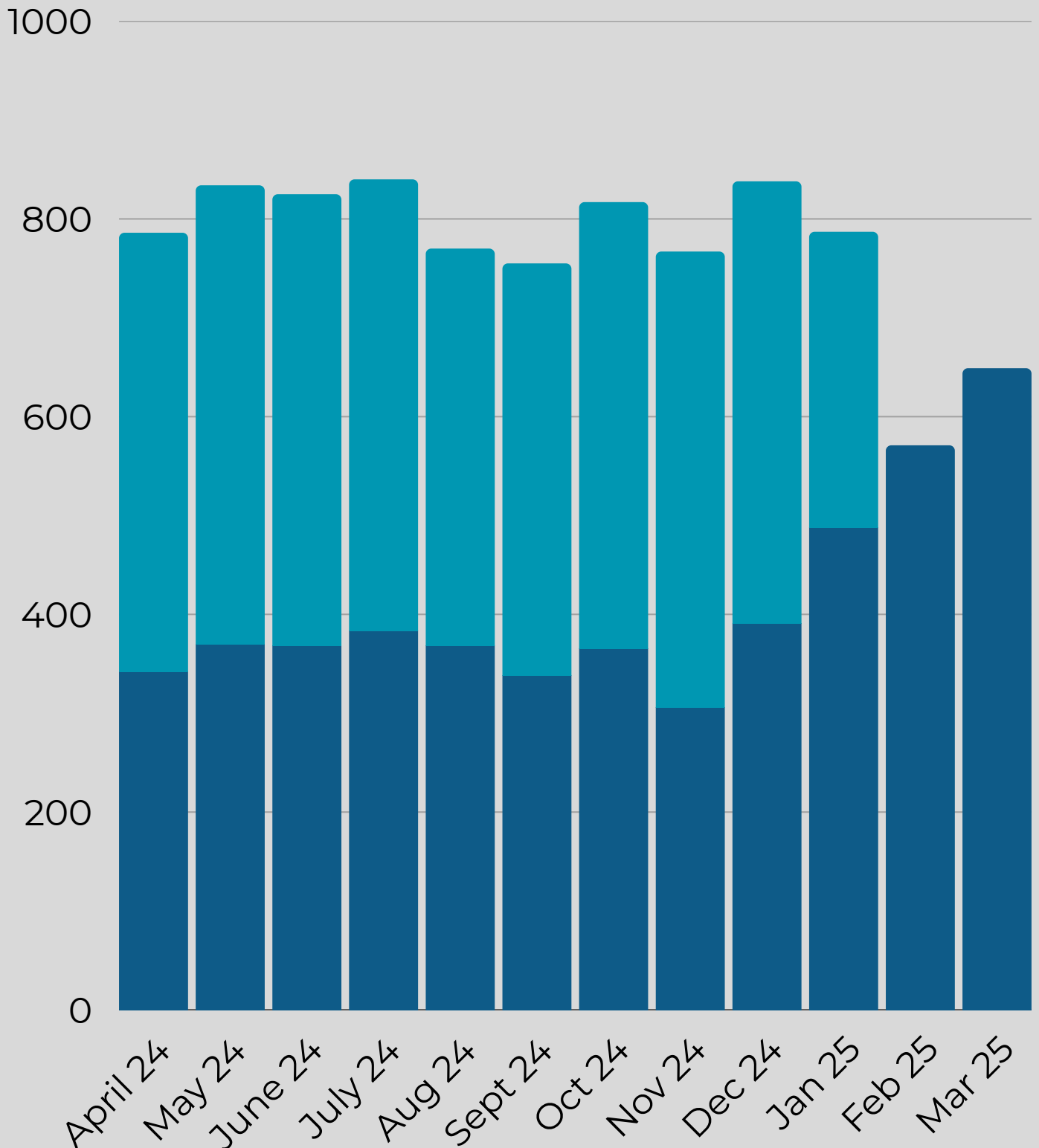
Detainees visited by ICVs in Bedfordshire

Custody and Scheme Statistics

April 2024 - March 2025

Graph of number of detainees held in Bedfordshire Police Custody per month

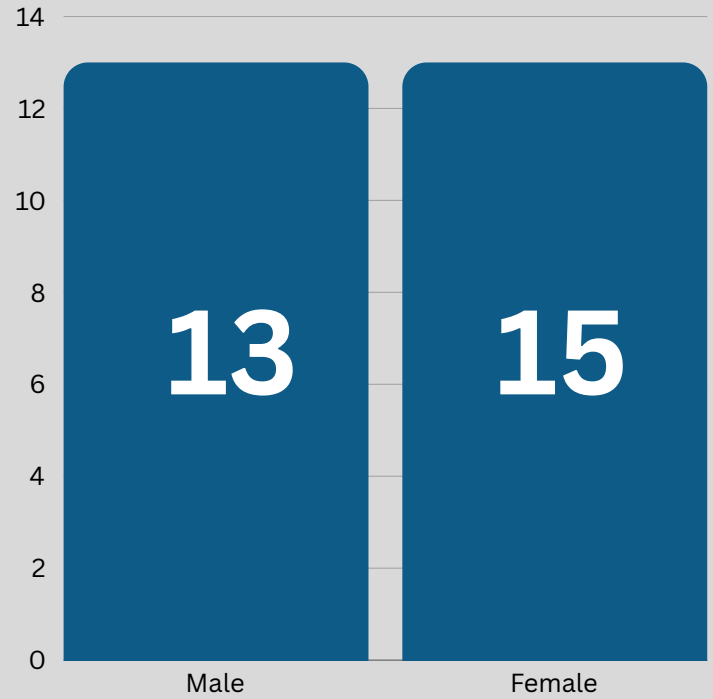
● Kempston ● Luton



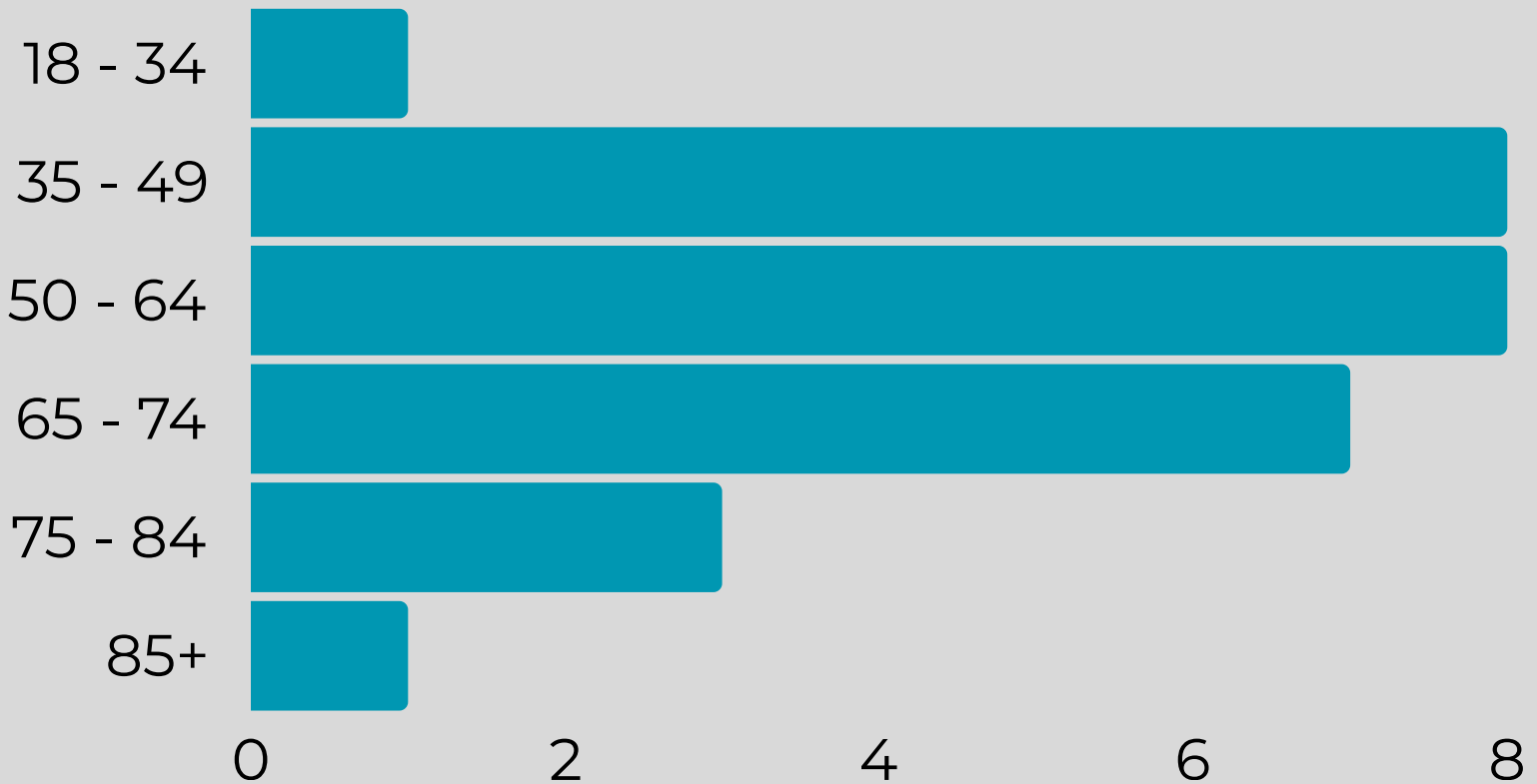
Equality and Diversity

Demographics of Volunteers

28
volunteers



Ages of our volunteers



We are currently operating a waiting list for our ICV scheme due to being at full capacity for visitors, if you would like to be added to the list, please contact us to find out more!

Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) Quality Assurance Framework

The Quality Assurance Framework (or QAF for short) was first run by ICVA with schemes in 2019 and is a framework for the locally run schemes to help them to:

- Reflect on how they comply with the Code of Practice, the legislation that underpins custody visiting.
- Celebrate areas of strength.
- Promote custody visiting and the achievements they have made.
- Drive up performance of schemes.
- Increase sharing of good practice and resources across schemes.

In a country-first, Bedfordshire in 2023 advanced from being code compliant to platinum for our scheme. Platinum status means Bedfordshire's scheme provides an outstanding standard of custody visiting and volunteer management.

On April 1st ICVA launched its third iteration of the QAF. The Bedfordshire Scheme would like to uphold their status and is therefore aiming to achieve a Platinum award again in December 2025.

[You can read more about the platinum award on the OPCC website.](#)



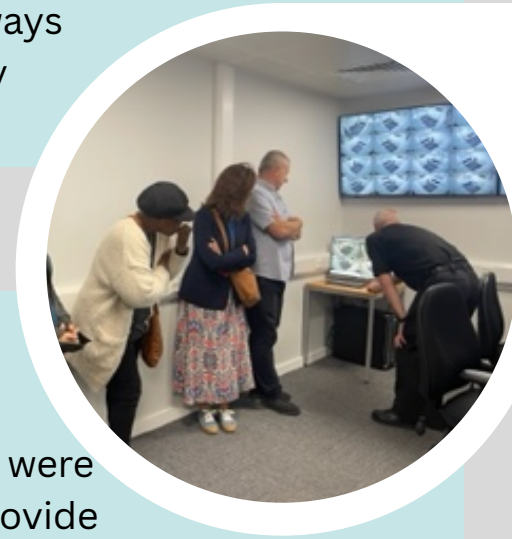
Achievements and Challenges Highlighted



Positive feedback and praise to custody staff

It is important to note that majority of ICV reports contain only positive observations regarding treatment of detainees, custody staff's attitudes and custody environment.

On several occasions ICVs mention how friendly and welcoming the custody staff have been on their visits. This is always brought to the attention of Custody Chief Inspector



ICVS were invited to Luton custody prior to the reopening

The custody unit at Luton Police Station was closed for 14 weeks as part of a major refurbishment. ICVs were invited prior to the reopening to provide their thoughts and feedback.

ICVs asked a variety of questions and were pleased with the outcome of the refurbishment.

Electronic report forms

Since October 2024, we have rolled out the use of electronic reporting via the use of iPads. All end of visit report forms are now completed via Microsoft Forms on the iPad.

These forms will be sent directly to the OPCC, Inspectors and Chief Inspector. This has resulted in a more practical and efficient process.



Achievements and Challenges Highlighted

Storage of Religious material

ICVs found that the religious materials were not correctly stored within custody. This has been raised and religious items are now stored in an appropriate way.

Monitoring of stock levels

ICVs are regularly checking and reporting back on stock level of clothing items, blankets and sanitary items, following a report of low levels of stock.

Checking of food items

ICVs are looking at the expiry dates of all food items and food certificates. On one visit, ICVs found expired sandwiches, which the detention officer immediately disposed of. ICVs have continued to monitor this.

Addressing the welfare needs of detainees

ICVs are continuously looking out for the needs of detainees. If the detainees are in need of something such as food, drink or a blanket, ICVs ensure that this is provided to them following their visit.

Vulnerable Detainees

ICVs continue to focus on and prioritise detainees that may be deemed more vulnerable within custody. ICVs will aim to visit children and vulnerable detainees to ensure they have been assigned an Appropriate Adult and given the right care based on their needs.

Vulnerable detainees can include, but are not limited to:

- Individuals with medical and/or mental health issues
- Neurodiverse needs
- Physical illness or disability
- Alcohol and/or substance misuse
- Children in custody

During an ICV custody visit, we ask that ICVs visit a maximum of 12 detainees. ICVs are then asked to dip sample the most vulnerable detainees to ensure they have been seen. At the end of their visit, when completing the report forms, ICVs are asked to report on the vulnerability of the detainee and whether they were provided with the appropriate support. Any concerns will be raised to the custody sergeant afterwards.

Furthermore, our Independent Custody Detention Scrutiny Panel (ICDSP), which a few of our ICVs are members of, review and access the custody records to ensure the detention and custody process was carried out appropriately. This panel will prioritise vulnerable detainees, to ensure the right level of care was provided.





CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS!



Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visiting Scheme



Can you spare some time for your local community?

WHO ARE WE?

- We are members of the local community who visit police custody suites unannounced to check on the treatment of detainees, the conditions in which they are being held and that their rights and entitlements are being observed.

WHO CAN BE A VISITOR?

- Subject to certain exceptions anyone can apply to be an ICV. Visitors must be more than 18 years old, have been a resident in the UK for at least three years prior to the date of application and currently reside, work or study in Bedfordshire.

Interested in joining us or would you like to find out more information?

Contact us:
PCC@beds.police.uk

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If you would like to find out more information about becoming an Independent Custody Visitor in Bedfordshire, or for general information regarding the scheme, please use the contact details below.

ICV Scheme Administrator
OPCC
Bedfordshire Police Headquarters
Woburn Road
Bedford
MK43 9AX

Tel: 01234 842 064

Email: PCC@beds.police.uk

Web: <https://www.bedfordshire.pcc.police.uk/independent-custody-visiting/>