

# INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING **ANNUAL REPORT**

## 2022- 2023



Office of the  
**Bedfordshire**  
Police & Crime  
Commissioner



@BedsOPCC @Fest4BedsPCC

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# WELCOME



I am pleased to present this Annual Report highlighting the incredible and vital work undertaken by our Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) in Bedfordshire throughout April 2022 to March 2023. I am delighted with the support and dedication that our ICVs have provided throughout the previous year.

Independent Custody Visiting gives the public a real insight into the conditions in Custody and provides reassurance that someone independent of the Police has regular oversight.

Shadowing a visit with our ICVs in the previous year was an insightful and eye-opening experience to see just how much of a difference an independent person can make in ensuring that detainees are being treated fairly and with dignity whilst in Police Custody.

It is imperative that our scheme represents the local community of Bedfordshire and I am pleased to hear that work has been undertaken to increase diversity within the scheme.

I am very grateful to our volunteers for providing such a crucial role in increasing the public's trust and confidence in Bedfordshire Police.

Many Thanks

***Festus Akinbusoye***

***Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire***

My policing career has spanned 24 years, starting out as a patrol officer in Luton, whereas a young in-service officer I spent a significant period of time working as an assistant custody officer (ACO) trying to manage the suite with 1-2 sergeants, long before we had the process and resources that we have now.

I enjoy reflecting back on the “good old days” and acknowledging how far our service has improved. We enjoy a much more collaborated approach working closely with our partners, including the ICV volunteers, Drug testing on Arrest (DTOA) and our embedded Health Care Professionals, we no longer have to wait hours for the one on call force medical officer. I take pride that we are all working together to improve the service for those who find themselves in custody.

I have been the lead for custody since February 2021, a role I thoroughly enjoy and where I can utilise my public protection and safeguarding investigation knowledge to support all. I remain extremely proud to be working within this team and I am looking forward to continuing to do so. My policing experience holds me in good stead when considering the vulnerabilities of those who come into police custody.

The support and the scrutiny of Independent Custody Visitors is invaluable and provides us with a positive critical eye. They are supportive of the custody teams whilst addressing any challenges that they see; it is a good partnership.

I believe the ICVs have a significant role to play in improving the custody journey and beyond as they are an independent point of contact between the detained person and the custody teams. I would personally like to thank them for their honest feedback and for all the work they do to support the DPs and the criminal justice process.

# OVERVIEW OF CUSTODY IN BEDFORDSHIRE

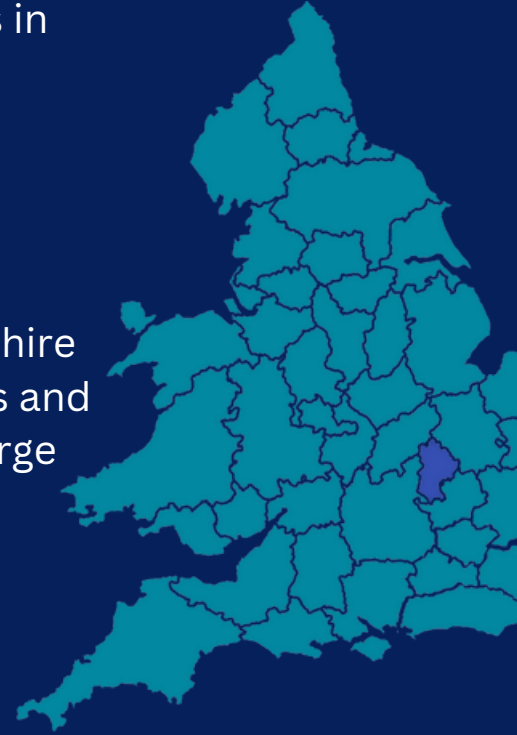
We currently have two dedicated Police Custody Suites in Bedfordshire. These are located at:

- Kempston - 22 cells
- Luton - 21 cells

At 477 square miles and with 664,500 people, Bedfordshire is one of England's smallest (yet most diverse) counties and faces complex crime challenges more usually seen in large metropolitan cities.

London Luton Airport, which is the UK's fifth busiest handled 13.1 million passengers in 2022. The M1 and A1(M) motorways traverse the county. Two principle railway lines connect people with the heart of London in less than an hour.

Bedfordshire has a complex mix of volume crime, serious crimes, drugs, gangs and terrorism threats. Alongside local issues, policing nationally faces new and emerging crime such as cyber-crime, child sexual exploitation and 'county line' drug supply and associated criminality.



# WHAT IS INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING?



The Police and Crime Commissioner has a statutory duty to maintain an Independent Custody Visiting Scheme for Bedfordshire. Independent Custody Visiting is a well established system whereby volunteers attend Police Custody Suites to check on the treatment of detainees, the conditions in which they are held and that their rights and entitlements are being observed. The scheme offers protection and confidentiality to detainees and the police and provides reassurance to the wider community.

Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) are volunteers who are members of the local community. Always working in pairs, they call at Police Custody Suites unannounced at any time. With agreement, the visitors can speak to detainees about their treatment or conditions, and take up any issues of concern with custody staff. A report of their findings is made prior to leaving the suite. Their work provides the Police and Crime Commissioner (and in turn the local community) with assurance that anyone held in custody is treated fairly and has access to appropriate facilities.



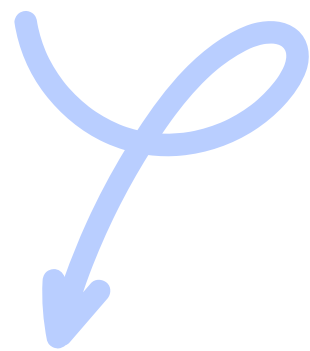
ICVs come from all sections of the community. They must be aged over 18, reside in Bedfordshire and be a resident in the United Kingdom for at least three years prior to the date of application. No specific qualifications are required as full training and support is provided, however visitors should be good listeners, non-judgmental and unbiased.



# ABOUT OUR BEDFORDSHIRE ICV SCHEME

The Bedfordshire Scheme currently has 33 ICVs volunteering across both Custody Suites as of April 2023. ICVs attend four quarterly panel meetings a year and receive regular training in Bedfordshire. The Chief Inspector and Inspector of Custody attend the quarterly panel meetings to provide an update and to allow the volunteers to ask any questions. ICVs always visit in pairs and as well as checking on the welfare of detainees, they also inspect the cells and facilities within the custody suite for health and safety purposes.

ICVs can also inspect custody records where appropriate and if consent has been obtained from the detainee. If an ICV discovers an issue on their visit, this is raised to the Custody Sergeant present or the Custody Inspector if the matter is of a serious nature that requires urgent attention.



Once ICVs write up their report, the paperwork is sent by Custody to the OPCC ICV Scheme Administrator who collates the information and reviews and addresses any issues reported.

# DETAINED PERSONS AND VISITS STATS



## April 2022 to March 2023

**8449** people were detained in Bedfordshire

**104** ICV visits undertaken

**4781** in Luton

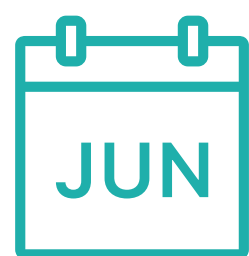
**3668** in Kempston

**46** in Luton

**58** in Kempston



**May** was the busiest month for Luton with **455** detainees held



**June** was the busiest month for Kempston with **353** detainees held

**395** detainees visited by ICVs through the year

### DID YOU KNOW?



The state-of-the-art custody facility in Kempston is accompanied by around 1,600 sqm of office space. This allows the force to have all its investigation teams operating under one roof, which translates into benefits around operational work and information sharing.

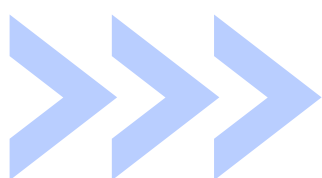


# DETAINED PERSONS AND VISITS STATS CONT.



## April 2022 to March 2023

Number of detainees visited by ICVs per quarter



Quarter 4 (Jan 23 – March 23)	111
Quarter 3 (Oct 22 – Dec 22)	117
Quarter 2 (July 22 – Sept 22)	91
Quarter 1 (April 22 – June 22)	76

Number of detainees held in Bedfordshire Custody per month



Month	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Total
Kempston	298	304	353	308	319	284	346	316	277	296	280	287	3668
Luton	412	455	410	446	441	398	402	383	367	396	318	353	4781

# EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY



Bedfordshire's Independent Custody Visiting Scheme is firmly committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all local people and communities and are committed to recruiting ICVs who are representative of the community, considering the different ethnic origins, gender, and age.

We welcome any suggestions as to how we can further improve our uptake of volunteers from all walks of life and areas within the community.

## Demographics of ICVs in Bedfordshire April 2023

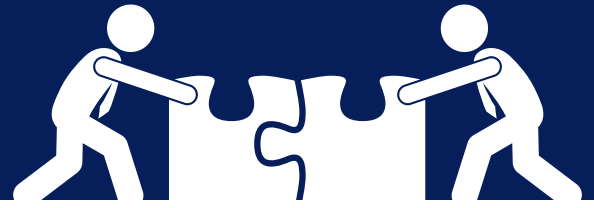
Gender	Number of ICVs in Bedfordshire
Male	14 (44%)
Female	18 (56%)
Transgender	0
Non-Binary	0

Ethnicity	Number of ICVs in Bedfordshire
White British	26 (81%)
Asian	2 (6%)
Black	4 (13%)

Age	Number of ICVs in Bedfordshire
18 - 34 years	3 (9%)
35 - 49 years	2 (6%)
50 - 64 years	11 (35%)
65-74 years	11 (35%)
75-84 years	4 (12%)
85 and over	1 (3%)

We are actively recruiting for ICVs so that we can accurately represent the local community of Bedfordshire. Please contact us to find out more!

# ACHIEVEMENTS AND ISSUES HIGHLIGHTED



ICVs were given the opportunity to sign up to shadow Custody Staff on their shift to observe from a different perspective to their role as an ICV

"I found it extremely insightful and it gave me a real understanding of the roles, the pressures and the amazing care and compassion delivered to detainees during the time spent in Custody, for whatever reason"

**John M (ICV)**

Snagging issues with the new Kempston Custody Suite were raised by ICVs within their reports such as water collecting in the exercise yard

Information was submitted in ICVs reports and the Scheme Manager reported this to the Inspector via email and in monthly catch-ups. One year after opening, the majority of snagging issues have been resolved.

The Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) visited to complete filming ahead of Volunteers Week. ICVs Norma, Safwa and Stephen were brilliant at supporting this and making the filming happen

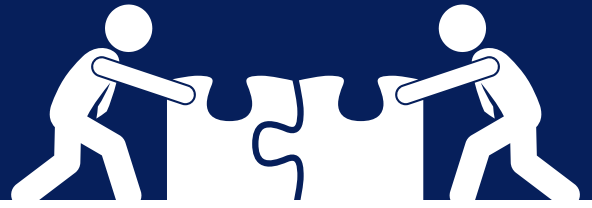
Having the opportunity to film our ICVs, the PCC and the new Custody Suite was a privilege. The video will be used nationally and it is a huge achievement for the Bedfordshire Scheme.

ICVs report that distraction items and reading material are regularly used and offered to detainees

Distraction items are provided to detainees on a risk assessment basis. Distraction items include books, magazines, papers, footballs, sudoku/wordsearch, fidget cubes/spinners, colouring books and pens.



# ACHIEVEMENTS AND ISSUES HIGHLIGHTED



ICVs highlighted that some detainees were requesting for toilet paper rather than it being made available in cells

This was escalated to the Inspector who briefed all Custody Staff in their next team meeting.

ICVs regularly compliment the professionalism and kindness of Custody Staff

## **ICV reports:**

"Quiet, calm and organised. Detention Officer very proficient"

"Noted helpful professionalism of staff."

"All staff encountered were caring, professional and helpful."

Specific focus on detainee dignity

We have updated our ICV paperwork and forms to ensure that ICVs are focussing on ensuring detainee dignity for example use of toilet paper, all females being offered hygiene packs and the offering of washing facilities.

ICVs highlighted that there could be a wider range of reading material made available

ICVs have donated books and reading material to Custody Suites and both Inspectors are actively trying to increase the supply of reading material available so that it is suitable for juveniles and adults.

# MEET SOME OF OUR ICVs



I am enjoying the visits and hope I am able to relate to the people we speak to who are being visited. I like to go with different experienced visitors as there is always something new to learn

**Mo C**

I enjoy being an ICV because I believe that I can be of help to the detainees and to the custody suite staff

**Nick W**

I like the scheme as every visit you do is different. I get to meet people (other ICV's) and benefit from their experience. ICVs are from all walks of life so we all bring something to this scheme, as well as improve the working relationship with the police

**Andy C**

I think it's a privilege to be an ICV as everyone who you visit deserves the right to be treated with care and shown humanity in what can be a chaotic and disturbing time. It is not our job to make judgements about the rights or wrongs in a detainee's life, but to make sure their time in Police Custody can be the best and safest environment for them

**Paula C**

Having been an ICV since March 2007 I can see significant improvements in the Custody facilities; in staff attitudes towards detainees; and in appreciation of the role of ICVs as 'critical friends' for the Force

**Nick H**

# RECRUITMENT



After a successful recruitment campaign in 2021-22, the scheme has continued to recruit by advertising via social media, universities, colleges, the community voluntary service (CVS) and using the local neighbourhood alert system.

Bedfordshire currently has 33 ICVs which is the highest number the scheme has had so far.

One of our **aims** is to continue to recruit from diverse backgrounds so that we can accurately represent the community of Bedfordshire.

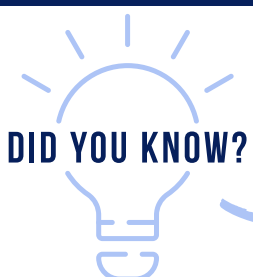
We also **aim** to increase the awareness of our scheme so that the local community can understand the incredible work of our volunteers.

In the past year we have:

- Attended the PCCs Faith Conference with a stall on ICVs
- Advertised through the PCC and office social media platforms
- Welcomed the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) to complete filming on ICVs ahead of Volunteers Week and to raise awareness
- Contacted local Faith Groups to explain about the scheme

In the following year, we will be:

- Continuing to advertise for volunteers through social media platforms, contact universities, colleges and continue to use CVS
- Attending the PCCs annual Faith Conference with a stall on ICVs
- Work with OPCC partners to raise awareness of the scheme



We ensure that our volunteers are not out of pocket when attending visits and panel meetings, and have a process for claiming back mileage incurred



# ICV TRAINING



Training of our ICVs is of the upmost important to ensure that they are fully up to date with changing legislation, and they have the tools to do their work. ICVs have continued to receive training via quarterly panel meetings using the Independent Custody Visitor Association (ICVA) bitesize material.

ICVs also have the opportunity to attend the ICVA annual conference which provides up to date information and talks from guest speakers. Several ICVs will be attending the next conference in May 2023.

In the past year, training has been completed on the following subject areas:

- ICVA Assertiveness Training
- ICVA Women in Police Custody Training
- ICVA Dignity in Police Custody Training
- ICVA Children and Young Persons in Custody Training
- ICVA Operation Safeguard Briefing
- ICVA Mental Health in Custody Training
- Session on completing updated ICV reporting forms and paperwork



Did you know that ICVA have a dedicated page of resources on their website for ICVs to complete bitesize training modules, all of which have been recorded to undertake at home, with all the links you need for any additional reading.

**READ MORE**



# LOOKING FORWARD TO 2023/24



## Updated ICV Report Forms

Following the work completed by the ICVA with the Criminal Justice Alliance, we have updated our report forms. Although our scheme was already reporting on age and ethnicity of detainees, we have now amended the categories of data and embedded age categories into the forms. We will continue to monitor trends.



## ICVA Quality Assurance Framework (QAF)

ICVA's QAF is used for schemes to benchmark progress and achievements and to further enhance engagement with the PCC and local community. Work has been ongoing through 2022 and will continue up to the September 2023 deadline to promote our compliance.



## Recruitment

It is important that our scheme is representative of the local community in Bedfordshire. We will continue our work in improving diversity within the scheme and are pleased with the progress so far. We will continue to engage with our current ICVs for feedback and recommendations.



# INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING ASSOCIATION (ICVA)



The Independent Custody Visitors Association (“ICVA”) is a Home Office, Policing Authority and Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) funded membership organisation set up to lead, support and represent PCC and Policing Authority led schemes.

ICVA work closely with the Government and Criminal Justice organisations to:

- Promote and support the effective provision of independent custody visiting in police forces in the United Kingdom
- To support independent custody visitors across England and Wales in contributing, wherever possible and appropriate, initiatives to improve conditions in police custody.
- Ensure alignment between the local delivery of independent custody visiting and the UK’s obligations under relevant international treaties, including the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT) and European Human Rights legislation.

For more information, please visit their website: [www.icva.org.uk](http://www.icva.org.uk)  
or on Twitter: @CustodyVisiting or @projectICVA





If you would like 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](mailto:PCC@beds.police.uk)

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

You can also keep up to date with the PCC and his offices day to day work via Twitter, Facebook and Instagram



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If you need to contact the police please either call **999** if it is an emergency

or dial **101** if it is a nonemergency

