



County Durham and Darlington

# INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING SCHEME **ANNUAL** REPORT



@durhampcc



Durham Police and Crime Commissioner

## 2023 – 2024

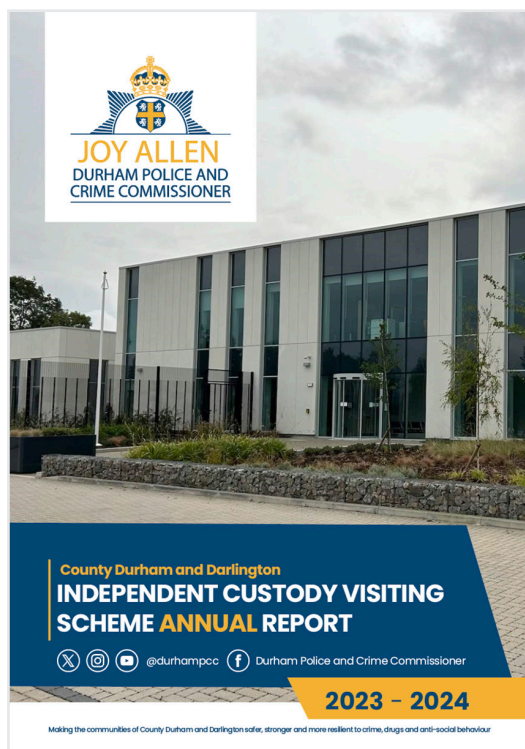
Making the communities of County Durham and Darlington safer, stronger and more resilient to crime, drugs and anti-social behaviour



**WELCOME TO**  
**DURHAM CONSTABULARY**  
**INVESTIGATIVE HUB**







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# FOREWORD

## POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER

I am delighted to present this Annual Report which covers the work of our Independent Custody Visiting Scheme in County Durham and Darlington throughout 2023–24.

Firstly, I would like to congratulate all our volunteers on another successful 12 months. I am grateful for the time they devote to these important duties to help build public trust and confidence in a key area of operational policing.

It has been an exceptionally busy year for our volunteers. Since the pandemic, we have operated with fewer Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs), however they have worked extremely hard to maintain a robust programme of visits to ensure our detainees continue to be treated with the dignity and care they are entitled.

We are entering an exciting period in our history with a new, state-of-the-art home imminent. The Durham Investigative Hub will not only address the poor physical state of our three existing custody facilities – rightly criticised by His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS) inspectors in 2019 – it will also transform the way we operate and perform in several key areas of business thanks to the highly advanced and contemporary design.

Alongside 48 new custody cells and modern waiting areas, the Hub will provide 24/7 health care by qualified medical staff to monitor and maintain the health and safety of detainees. This currently cannot be achieved across three sites and often results in several hours of police time lost by transporting detainees to hospital. The efficiencies made possible through this project can be reinvested in frontline policing to benefit our wider communities.

The building will also provide improved office space and welfare facilities for custody staff and our ICVs when they visit to conduct their assessments. I believe every police officer, staff member or volunteer deserves to work in a fit for purpose environment that helps them perform their duties effectively and I am delighted that this is now possible in Durham.

We will continue to strive for the highest standards. As we transition from the old to the new facilities, our ICVs will play a critical role in driving further improvements in our processes and procedures to ensure Durham not only delivers the very best quality of care to detainees but is held aloft as a beacon of good practice nationally.

**Joy Allen**

Durham Police and Crime Commissioner



## FOREWORD – CHIEF INSPECTOR

It has been a busy and challenging year for the three custody sites across Durham Constabulary. The total number of detainees to this date is 12251 which is an average of over 200 more per month than last year. We have welcomed four new Inspectors, numerous new Sergeants and detention officers into the command which has had a great impact on our service delivery.

Our focus for the year has been to improve the standards of investigation and detention of juveniles in custody, a subject which has been highlighted by the HMICFRS inspections. The team has done a great deal of work to develop the “Juvenile’s Rights” document which although sounds simple, took hours of work ensuring that children in custody felt safe, supported, were aware of their rights the welfare provision and legal support that was available to them. The document was produced with the consultation and support of local school children, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Equality Diversity and Inclusion team. We believe that the document is the country’s first and will have a positive impact on children in custody.

Other new projects in the custody area are the launch of the use of distraction aids to support detainees with neuro diversity issues, the purchase of a digital footwear scanner and the Drug Testing on Arrest scheme. This scheme identifies the type drug users are susceptible to commit certain types of offences and importantly links drug use to types of domestic abuse offences.

The information is then used to put the correct rehabilitative pathways in place to reduce reoffending.

We will be moving into the new Centralised Investigative Hub through December 2024 / January 2025. The building is a huge step away from our current estate and provides a fantastic working environment for our staff. We will have a greater cell capacity, better medical provision and services in a state-of-the-art facility. The custody staff are currently working on new training and procedures for the opening of the building. 2024 will be an exciting year for the Custody Command, partners and stakeholders.

I will welcome the visits from the ICV’s in the new facility to provide any feedback or concerns to ensure the facility operates at the highest possible levels, protects the vulnerable and delivers high quality investigations to support victims of crime.

**Darren Walton**  
Chief Inspector







## INTRODUCTION

The Independent Custody Visitor (ICV) schemes exist to provide assurance to local communities so that they can have confidence in the way the police treat people who are held in their custody.

The Police and Crime Commissioner must ensure that robust and effective procedures for establishing and maintaining the scheme are in place. The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) recruits volunteer ICVs to undertake the role and provides them with support and on-going training to ensure that they can carry out their role effectively. The scheme plays an important part in maintaining police accountability to the local community and the aim of this annual report is to ensure that this information is available in the public domain.

ICVs are vetted volunteers who visit our custody suite in pairs and speak to detainees who are being held in police custody. Visits are random, unannounced and can take place at any time of the day and night.

## OUR SCHEME

The Independent Custody Visiting Scheme in Durham has one panel operating across 3 custody suites in Durham, Darlington and Peterlee. There are 38 cells. As of 31 March 2024, there were 9 ICVs on the scheme. The panel is assisted by a Scheme Manager from the OPCC and a Scheme Co-ordinator (who is a custody visitor).

The scheme continued to recover from the effects of the Covid Pandemic which resulted in changes to the number of custody visitors we had available. We are grateful to the custody visitors for filling in and undertaking as many visits as they could. Recruitment for new ICV's will take place in the Summer of 2024 to coincide with the opening of the new centralised Investigative Hub.

Within their six-monthly ICV Panel meetings, ICVs are provided with data on their recent visits. They are asked to consider this data when arranging visits to ensure visits are conducted at varied days and times throughout the week. The panel meetings are also attended by a Custody Inspector who will provided ICV's with any information they may need to be aware of.

## ICV VISITS

Between 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2024 19 face to face visits were undertaken.

Darlington	5
Durham	7
Peterlee	7



## OF THOSE VISITS...

- 120 detainees were in custody
- 52 detainees visited
- 34 refused to be visited
- 18 were unable to be seen#

## DURING THESE VISITS THE FOLLOWING WERE CHECKED AND RAISED IF NECESSARY:

- That cells and toilets have been maintained and in working order.
- CCTV is present and working.
- Reasonable temperatures being maintained within the cells.
- Ensuring electronic signature pads were working.
- Any medical attention or medication required has been provided.
- Any detainee visible injuries have been explained. Female detainee hygiene concerns are addressed.
- Washing facilities and access to fresh clothing have been provided.
- The food preparation areas and bedding are in a clean, tidy and hygienic condition.
- The detainee is satisfied with their treatment in custody.
- With the consent of the detainee, ICVs check the custody log to ratify the detainee's Account of their detention.

Over the last year many positive comments have been noted. ICVs regularly note within their findings that custody staff are welcoming and custody is clean and tidy with everything in good order.

ICVs are expected to discuss any minor welfare or environmental issues with the Custody Sergeant or accompanying officer at the time of the visit.

Any issues which cannot be resolved during a visit, or which ICVs feel need to be dealt with at a higher level are reported to the Scheme Administrator within the OPCC.

## TRAINING AND EVENTS THIS YEAR...

- ICVA Quality Assessment Framework - In October 2023, the scheme was awarded the Code Compliant Award Status
- The ICV Scheme Managers Conference was held on 15th November 2023. Topics covered were; the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community and policing; Immigration Detention Monitoring; Scrutiny Panels, Successes and Challenges and the ICVA Business Plan Consultation
- The Annual Regional Seminar was held on Saturday 2nd March 2024 which focused on Personal Safety in Custody, this was held in partnership with fellow ICV teams from Northumbria and Cleveland. This was an excellent day with input from specialists in this field and also the Independent Custody Visiting Association.





## **MEET OUR ICV SCHEME CO-ORDINATOR ANNE GLADSTONE**

Anne has been an ICV with our scheme since February 2009 and our Scheme Co-ordinator for the last 5 years.

### **A few words from Anne....**

"My role involves visiting the three custody suites in Durham and Darlington to check on how detainees are being treated. I usually go out with another volunteer and together we ensure processes in place support the welfare of these clients. I feel that the most important part of my job is guaranteeing the dignity of those in custody, so I'll ask them if they're warm enough, have had enough to eat and if someone knows they're there. We're also responsible for ensuring detainees have proper access to legal advice and if they have been read their rights, with the proper forms completed.

I enjoy meeting new people and love attending the annual ICVA conference in London. This role is very person centric which is perfect for me, and I can also work it around my other commitments. A highlight for me will be the opening of the new Custody Suite in Spennymoor in 2024.

I would recommend for anyone to get involved and volunteer. It doesn't matter if its just something small like handing out meals in a care home or something with a bit more responsibility like my role. It will make you feel so much better that you are helping serve and give back to the community that you live in."





## LOOKING FORWARD...

### Investigative Hub

This year will see the opening of the new centralised Investigative Hub in Spennymoor. This new 2-storey building will provide modern accommodation alongside 48 modern cells, interview rooms, and crime scene investigation facilities.

The suite will incorporate a safe and improved environment for staff, detainees, and visitors, as well as the health workers and legal professionals who will also work there. The Investigative hub will provide a flexible and sustainable building needed to replace the existing ageing custody estate. Independent Custody Visitors (ICV) will familiarise themselves with the new site and be provided with the appropriate training.

### Recruitment

This year, we will recruit and train new Custody Visitors into the scheme in readiness for the opening of the centralised Investigative Hub.



## FURTHER INFORMATION

**Durham Police and Crime Commissioner's Office**  
Police Headquarters, Aykley Heads Durham DH1 5TT

Call: 0191 375 2001 | Email: [general.enquiriespcc@durham-pcc.gov.uk](mailto:general.enquiriespcc@durham-pcc.gov.uk)



@durhampcc



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