



INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING SCHEME FOR LANCASHIRE

Annual Report 2024/25

Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) Annual Report April 2024 – March 2025

This Annual Report captures details of the work of the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme within Lancashire from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. The report includes information in relation to volunteers, custody facilities and outcomes from the visits undertaken throughout the year.

Background

In 1981, Lord Scarman commissioned an inquiry into the Brixton and Toxteth riots and recommended that, in order to promote public confidence in policing, a system should be developed whereby policing activity should be made more publicly accessible, easily scrutinised and subject to greater questioning and comment. As a result, the concept of Custody Visiting (or Lay Visiting as it was then known) was recommended. Home Office Ministers approved the provision of custody visiting on a voluntary basis on the part of Police Authorities, which subsequently became a statutory requirement when the Police Reform Act 2002 came into effect. In 2012, the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act transferred the responsibility to Police and Crime Commissioners.

Independent Custody Visiting is therefore a statutory requirement of Police and Crime Commissioners of which the purpose is to provide independent oversight of the detention of people in police custody. The aim of this is to provide the public with confidence that the police treat people lawfully and with respect whilst in custody.

Police and Crime Commissioners are responsible for maintaining and administering an Independent Custody Visiting Scheme in their area, although the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner (OPCC) monitors the operation of the Scheme on behalf of the Commissioner. Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) are members of the local community who volunteer to check on the welfare of people detained in police custody.

ICVs visit custody suites unannounced and will report directly to the OPCC detailing any issues that arise from a visit or requiring further action. Recommendations made by ICVs lead to improvements for the welfare and dignity of detainees. Any issues requiring immediate action are escalated to the Custody Sergeant at the time of the visit. Consequently, ICVs play a valuable role in maintaining public confidence in policing.



Lancashire Constabulary Custody Suites

There are four operational custody suites in Lancashire:

- West – Blackpool and Lancaster
- East – Greenbank (Blackburn)
- South - Preston

All four custody suites operate 24/7. Each custody suite has its own team of Custody Sergeants and Detention Officers and all suites are well equipped with provision of food and drink, blankets, clothing, religious and reading materials.

Overall numbers of detainees – 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025	
Custody Suite	Annual throughput
Greenbank	10,761
Blackpool	9,230
Preston	9,079
Lancaster	2,862
Total	31,932

Lancashire ICV Scheme

As of 31 March 2025, there were 27 active ICVs participating in the scheme across the county. Members of the ICV scheme are split into four panel groups, each one serving one of the custody suites. ICVs visit custody suites unannounced and at any time or day of the week and are completely independent from Lancashire Constabulary.

Issues of immediate concern are provided to a Custody Sergeant on the visit. Issues of concern, areas for improvement and positive feedback are provided to the OPCC who then liaises with the Custody Management Inspector (CMI) for each suite. The Scheme Manager meets monthly with the Chief Inspector to discuss ICV feedback.

The Police & Crime Commissioner has oversight of the operation of the Scheme and is actively involved in recruitment, meetings, training and thank-you events. Lancashire is a participating member of the national Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA). Scheme Managers from Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Merseyside and North Wales liaise regularly to share good practice, examine benchmarking data and provide feedback to the Association.

April 2024 – March 2025 Lancashire ICVs had the opportunity to attend:

- Panel meetings: held in October/November 2024 and January 2025
At each panel meeting the CMI from the relevant custody suite was present to provide updates and to address any issues brought to their attention by ICVs.
- North West and North Wales Regional ICV Conference: held in September 2024
- ICV Thank You lunch attended by Lancashire PCC: held in October 2024
- Various online training events run by ICVA.
- Three of the ICVs are also voluntary panel members for the Custody Detention Scrutiny Panel which is held four times a year.

ICV Visiting Data

The below data captures details of the work of the ICV scheme within Lancashire from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 and includes information in relation to volunteers, custody facilities and outcomes from the visits undertaken throughout the year.

Number of ICV visits Apr 24 – Mar 25	
North	30
West	46
East	38
South	44
Total	158

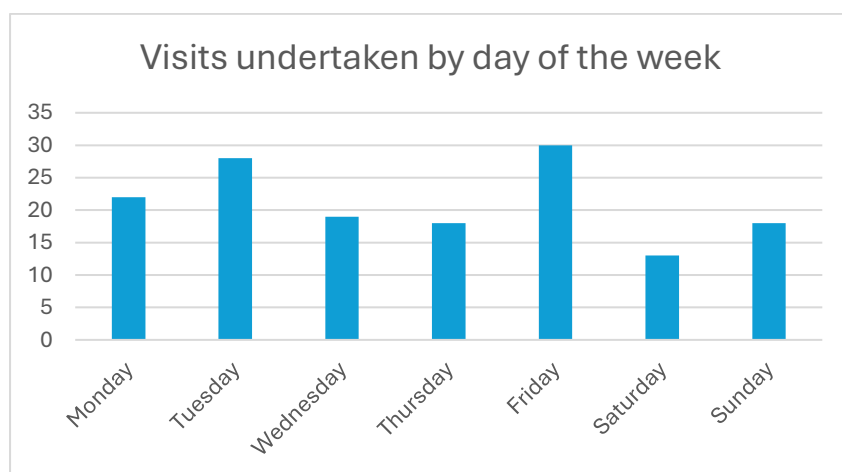
Lancaster Custody Suite (North) had a full closure in July/August 2024 for CCTV implementation in all cells, Preston Custody Suite (South) had a full closure in January 2025 for the same reason.

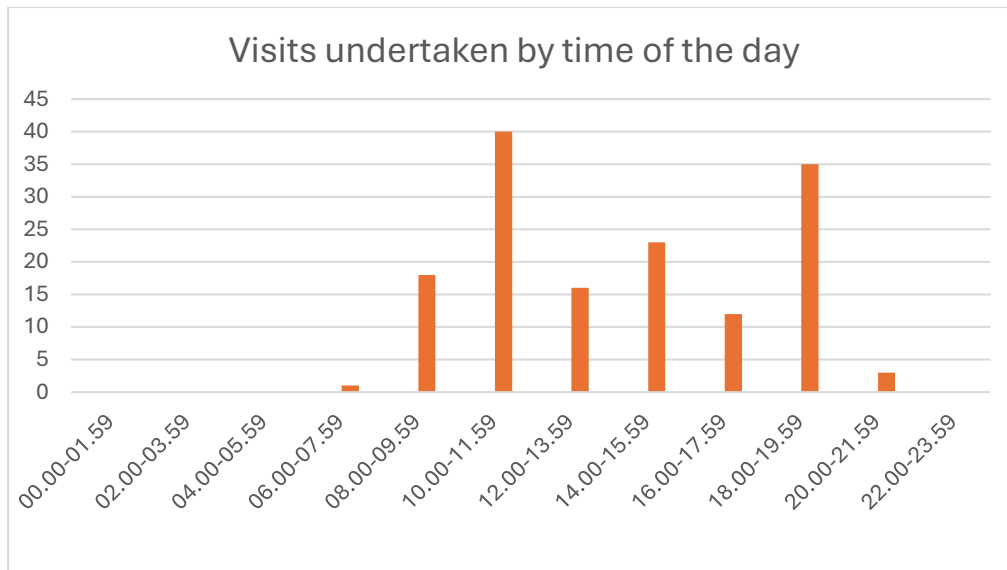
2024/2025	DPs* through custody	Total ICV visits	Total DPs at ICV visits	Total no of DPs visited
Apr – Jun	8191	41	574	334
Jul – Sept	7927	38	562	361
Oct – Dec	7849	44	529	313
Jan – Mar	7974	35	501	294
Total	31,941	158	2,166	1,302

*Detained Persons

Detainees may not receive a visit due to being interviewed, asleep, intoxicated or on advice given by custody staff due to safety reasons. Detainees may also decline a visit and 443 detainees exercised this right throughout 2024/25.

The OPCC analyses data from visits to ensure that the ICV Scheme remains effective and that visits are completed throughout the week as well as at various times of the day. The graphs below indicate at what day of the week and time of the day visits were completed throughout 2024/2025.





ICV Scheme Findings

ICVs are independent to the Constabulary and during their visits, through proactive engagement with detainees, custody staff and custody facility will aim to establish whether detainees' welfare needs are met and whether those detained in custody are treated appropriately. They also ensure that PACE and the Codes of Practice are being complied with. Each ICV custody visit results in production of a report form and findings from the visit are fed back to the OPCC. Lancashire Constabulary is being informed of any findings that would be concerning but also, which is just as important, of any positive feedback and observations.

In most cases issues brought to the attention of ICVs are resolved during the custody visit, directly with the custody staff, or immediately afterwards. Such issues will range from requests for additional drink or/and food, additional blankets to detainee needing medication, wishing to contact family members and/or solicitor. It is vital to note that ICVs in their reports and verbal feedback provide PCC with reassurance that Lancashire Constabulary provides detainees with high standards of care, and they are treated with respect and dignity. Moreover, ICVs have a professional, cooperative relationship with their police colleagues, and the scheme works well because custody staff value the role and the insight and transparency it provides.

Throughout 2024/25 on 72 occasions ICVs reported issues with custody facilities and equipment, examples have included:

- Shortage of blankets
- Buzzers not working
- Broken sink
- Faulty hatch
- Disabled toilet/shower out of use
- Cells needing deep clean
- Shortage of certain sizes of custody greys
- Some of food out of date
- Leak in cell
- Microwave in kitchen not working

- Low stock of feminine hygiene products
- Front and back gates not working properly – security concerns when taking detainees from vans
- Alarm Strip not working
- Wheelchair not fit for purpose
- Temperature issues – too hot or too cold
- Low stock on distraction items
- Paint flaking on cell wall
- Untidy exercise yard
- Shortage of bag tags for possessions
- Vent on hatch needs repairing
- Potential suspension points.

Estate issues listed above have been resolved and currently the OPCC is monitoring progress on any outstanding actions reported in the last quarter. Also, a recurring theme is low staffing levels in all four custody suites. Delays of entry, abandoned visits and staff shortages have been reported on 30 occasions.

Lancashire Constabulary across the year has implemented various steps and actions to remedy this issue. The force set out a minimum staffing levels, with an agreed process in case if, this number would drop down then custody staff roles (detention officers and Sergeants) would be backfilled through central resourcing. Moreover, additional staffing resources have been secured to fill in the vacant positions. Work is ongoing in this area.

ICV Scheme overview/achievements for 2024/25

- New Scheme Administrator in post
- Quarterly panel meetings for each of the 4 panels resumed.
- Part of North West and North Wales Regional ICV Conference in September 2024
- Successful Volunteer thank you lunch in October 2024, attended by PCC.
- Successfully recruited new ICVs for Preston and Lancaster
- ICV Handbook updated and circulated to all ICVs
- Custody Detention Scrutiny Panels started with 3 ICVs recruited as panel members.

Constabulary Custody updates and highlights for 2024/25

- CCTV installed in every cell in 3 out of the 4 suites with Blackburn planned for upgrade by Sept/Oct 2025.
- Successful recruitment of 10 new CDOs
- 3 extra custody training course so more Sergeants are trained.
- Introduction of menopause packs for female detainees aged 40+
- Increase in cell capacity / holding cells and booking in desks to be carried out at Preston (Sept / Oct 2025 or Jan/Feb 2026)
- Improved technology within the Custody Suites – Language line tablets and Mobile phones for visits

Lancashire Constabulary and Lancashire Independent Custody Visitors continue to share a very positive working relationship. The constabulary and scheme manager actively offer to assist with any training and communication engagements to ensure a consistent message is going out to all parties. Visits to all police stations indicates that detainees are treated with dignity and respect and in accordance with Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984. Whilst the role of the Custody Visitor is an independent function, we welcome the close liaison with custody staff and divisional and senior management in order to identify and correct any issues or concerns at the earliest opportunity. The scheme manager and constabulary lead hold regular engagement meetings to ensure any issues are dealt with in a timely manner.

The success of the scheme is due to the commitment of the Independent Custody Visitors and the leadership of the Scheme Manager who all play a vital role in maintaining public confidence in this high-risk area of business to ensure that safeguarding of some of our most vulnerable people is at the forefront of everything we do.

Priorities for ICV Scheme for 2025/26

- Recruitment drive for ICVs with target number of 8-10 ICVs in each panel.
- Expand diversity of panel members
- Online reporting form to be up and running by end of June 2025
- Continuous success of Custody Detention Scrutiny Panels
- To work towards achieving Silver in Quality Assurance Framework assessed by ICVA
- To run annual training course for ICVs in May 2025.

The Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA)

Lancashire PCC is a member of the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA). ICVA is a Home Office funded organisation that operates to promote and support the effective provision of custody visiting nationally. As a national resource for custody visiting, ICVA works closely with government and criminal justice organisations to:

- raise public awareness on the rights, entitlements, health and wellbeing of people held in police custody;
- advise on best practice for independent custody visiting schemes nationally; and
- provide training, publicity and support to PCCs, their offices and ICVs.

For additional information in relation to custody visiting nationally, please visit the Independent Custody Visiting Association website www.icva.org.uk

Contact Us

For further information in relation to the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme or if you are interested in becoming ICV please contact:

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