



**MINUTES AND ACTIONS OF THE INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING
SCHEME
HELD BOTH REMOTELY ON TEAMS AND IN PERSON IN HAWTHORN
MEETING ROOM,
POLICE HEADQUARTERS ON 23rd OCTOBER 2025**

Present: Jean Munton - Chair, Independent Custody Visitor (JM)
Mike Hallinan – Independent Custody Visitor (MH)
Alan Heywood – Independent Custody Visitor (AH)
Linda Mason - Independent Custody Visitor (LM)
David Salmon - Independent Custody Visitor (DS)
Richard Holland - Independent Custody Visitor (RH)
Andrea Williams - Independent Custody Visitor (AW)

Also in attendance:

Nicola Warren – Scheme Manager, OPCC (NW)
Ceri Hiscox - Scheme Administrator, OPCC (CH)
Inspector Ali – Custody Ystrad (INSP/A)
Superintendent Bartley – Custody and Criminal Justice (SUPT/B)

The meeting commenced at 6:07pm.

	Notes and Actions	Action
1.	Apologies	
	Apologies for absence were received from A Robinson, L Price, M O'Farrell and L Langley.	
2.	Minutes and Actions from Previous Meetings	
	The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record.	

3.	Scheme Update and Performance Framework Update	
	NW welcomed Supt Bartley to the meeting. It was agreed that the Scheme Update would be taken as the first agenda item. NW reported that a concern had been raised regarding a recent change in process, which had been challenged by some of the ICVs. NW explained that the issue related to consent during visits. An incident had been raised by an ICV in which consent was sought from a detainee, but access to their custody record was subsequently denied while the detainee was out of the cell, despite consent having been given. The officer required consent from the detainee either in written form on the custody record or to for them to be called into earshot when consent was being sought from the detainee. NW highlighted that this was different from previous practice, but it had been accepted as a genuine request in line with General Data Protection Regulations. NW clarified that a custody record could only be viewed without consent if a detainee was deemed incapable of giving consent. NW reported that she had initially reviewed the Code of Practice, noting that the Home Office guidance could be interpreted in different ways. She explained that custody records could be examined with consent, but the Code did not explicitly specify that an officer had to be within earshot when consent was being sought. She highlighted that this lack of clarity meant that some other police forces interpreted the requirement differently, with most allowing consent to be given out of officer earshot. NW stated that she had spoken to the Inspector and Chief Inspector in Custody and questioned why the force was applying a different practice. The Inspector had explained that officers viewed consent as relating to another person's data. NW noted that although the detainee's data was involved, the Force was the data controller because it held the information. NW confirmed that she had also spoken to the force's Data Protection Officer (DPO), who advised that detainees could be classed as vulnerable. In such circumstances, detainees might feel obliged to give consent when asked, regardless of whether the request came from an ICV or an officer.	

NW reported that the DPO had advised that consent should be sought with the officer in earshot to protect both the ICVs and the detainee, as detainees could revoke their consent. NW sought clarification from the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) who had confirmed that the majority of forces continued to operate in the way the force had previously done, by relying on the consent given to the ICVs. NW reported that the National Police Chiefs' Council Custody (NPCC) Lead was also contacted, who advised that they were not aware of any other forces seeking consent with an officer in earshot and recommended that the force should continue to follow its original process, whereby the word of the ICV was accepted. The NPCC Data Protection Officers advised that the matter should fall under the principle of public task and not consent so the original process could be resumed. NW explained that these findings were put to the Force for consideration and Superintendent Bartley (SUPT/B) was going to provide an update. JW questioned what Act the change had been based on as they did not feel a specific response had been received to their emails. NW explained the responses had been candid and it was related to the consent element of General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). NW had also offered for JW to speak with the Force Data Protection Officer to explain further. SUPT/B introduced herself. She apologised if the matter had arisen from a lack of information provided by Gwent Police and emphasised the importance of being open and transparent. She noted that NW had made considerable efforts to gather information and seek advice. SUPT/B stated that, unless she had misunderstood, the matter appeared to be down to a single incident involving one Sergeant. She explained that this appeared to have been an error, possibly made with the best of intentions, but nonetheless an error. She concluded that the process remained as it had always been and that NW had sought extensive information and advice in response to the matter. SUPT/B explained that clarity was available and suggested NW share the information she had gathered from the association to ensure transparency around the enquiries. JM expressed gratitude to SUPT/B for attending and for the clarity she had provided, noting that the matter was now resolved. MH recounted a conversation with a custody sergeant, witnessed by a colleague, in which the sergeant referred to a document. Although MH initially said an apology was unnecessary, the sergeant had offered to apologise if he was mistaken. Following the challenges	NW AA
--	-----------------------------------

leading up to that evening, he expressed that he would now like to receive the apology. INSP/A to follow up.

SUPT/B explained that a revised Cell Usage report had been introduced which allowed staff to run off a list of people currently within the unit removing the need for information to be written out. She confirmed that this report contained all the fields required for the ICV form. She stated that all staff had received a full briefing on how to access and print the form.

SUPT/B added that she had made clear to teams the national guidance on appropriate waiting times for access, which should not extend to twenty or thirty minutes but should be within five to ten minutes, provided the unit was safe.

She gave her full commitment to improving the situation, acknowledged that recent experiences had not been acceptable, and assured members that she had worked hard in recent weeks to address the issues and would continue to do so.

JM informed the meeting that during their last visit two neighbourhood police officers were covering due to insufficient staff within custody. She stated she had to brief the officers about who the ICVs were, what their role involved, and what information they required.

SUPT/B responded by offering context regarding staffing. She explained that there were currently eight or nine vacancies for CDOs. Recruitment had been completed, with the process beginning in August. Applicants had been paper sifted, interviewed, and required to undertake fitness tests. They were now in the vetting stage, with start dates confirmed for the beginning of January. SUPT/B stated that this was the earliest possible date for new staff to join.

SUPT/B explained that in January, if staffing gaps remained, the force would immediately return to recruitment to maintain a bank of people ready to join. She advised that a number of CDOs often sought other employment opportunities within the organisation. This movement of staff created gaps which required reliance on police officers working overtime or providing cover to maintain resilience.

She acknowledged that some of the staff members encountered in recent weeks may have been less familiar with the ICV process because they were resilience staff and not permanently based in the custody unit.

MH asked whether custody detention staff training would also include information about the role of ICVs and where staff could access the

	appropriate literature to understand the authority underpinning the role SUPT/B reassured the meeting that ICV awareness is part of custody training and confirmed that newly appointed, well-regarded sergeants are now in place across multiple teams. NW highlighted that she attended CDO training to give input and a printout of the ICV role was kept with visit report forms within custody for officers to refer to. NW explained that work was underway to move the visit form to a secure electronic version, which would improve real-time access, reduce the risk of loss, and address legibility issues. The new design would allow quick box-checking with the option to add detail later, making the process more efficient than the current system where CH manually inputs paper form data into a spreadsheet. NW reported that there were currently ten visitors, with Lisa potentially rejoining from January. Thirteen visits had been scheduled, twelve forms received at the time of her report, and the final report later submitted. She noted there was one unusually long visit lasting two hours to see five detainees and suggested increasing weekend and evening visits to ensure greater randomness as encouraged by the ICVA. NW also highlighted issues from visit forms passed to the INSP/A, including a case where a detainee was held for over twenty-four hours without the custody record noting the authorising officer's rank. Although the detention was correctly authorised to preserve evidence, she stressed that the rank should have been recorded. MH noted that the issue lay in how information was recorded, as custody records showed that a review had taken place but did not specify the time or the authorising officer, leaving details to be assumed. INSP/A explained that detentions beyond twenty-four hours must be authorised by a Superintendent, emphasising they always aim to move detainees through the system in a timely manner. He outlined that detainees receive two reviews by an Inspector before a Superintendent could grant an additional twelve hours, after which the Superintendent must remain involved. He confirmed that two reviews had been properly recorded on the custody record. INSP/A clarified that visitors were given a printout with the custody record, cell number, and basic detainee details, along with ICV forms to complete, and the meeting confirmed they were satisfied with this process.	
--	---	--

NW noted that the only issue with the custody printouts was that they included all detainees not just those in custody when the visit commenced. INSP/A explained that the current process had been changed to assist ICVs and now all of the released detainees were moved to the bottom of the list and crossed out, leaving the current detainees at the top. NW reported that the kitchen was generally clean but highlighted ongoing issues with the fridge, which sometimes leaked, likely due to a faulty seal. JM added that the drawers in the kitchen were dirty and noted that food thermometers were stored inside them, though the cleaner immediately offered to clean them when this was pointed out during a visit. INSP/A confirmed he would create a new folder to collate visit forms and comments and share them with the team to improve feedback. JM explained that while visitors were technically entitled to view CCTV if dissatisfied, in practice they usually asked the Inspector to review it to limit access and avoid data protection issues. NW clarified that the Home Office code of practice does not permit ICVs to view CCTV directly just to check that it is in working order, if there was concern that needed investigation it should be referred to the scheme manager. She recalled a previous case where a detainee made an allegation of an assault against officers, this was referred to NW to follow up, and the Inspector reviewed the footage and then passed it to another department in the Force independent department to verify his observations. There was no assault, and the detainee was kicking officers and had to be restrained. NW advised that some forces had established custody detention scrutiny panels, which was being considered in Gwent, where trained ICVs could review footage, including use of force, to ensure compliance. NW reported one near miss had been recorded in the past quarter. A near miss was an incident that almost went wrong but caused no breach or injury. She informed the meeting that custody access was generally achieved within five to fifteen minutes, with only one case exceeding fifteen minutes and no visits abandoned. NW asked INSP/A what training CDOs received regarding medication requirements and how quickly they referred detainees to the nurse, questioning whether they made their own judgements on urgency. INSP/A clarified that detainee medical needs were assessed during booking by the custody officer, who created medication requests	
--	--

when required. CDOs could also raise spontaneous requests and were trained to alert the Healthcare Practitioner and custody officer immediately if they judged a situation to be a medical emergency.

Such decisions relied on the CDO's judgement, with all staff receiving only the standard Mod 3 enhanced medical training and no additional training for identifying emergencies.

JM explained that nurses or practitioners were not required to see every detainee, as medical needs were assessed during booking. She noted that detainees often later told ICVs they had medical needs but had not seen a practitioner, leading to complaints about missed medication. This arose because police were triaging detainees to decide who required medical attention, though some needs only emerged after booking, creating difficulties.

INSP/A explained that detainees were monitored through physical observations and general conversations rather than a fixed set of questions, and if a detainee reported feeling unwell or showed a sudden change in condition, it would trigger a risk assessment and could lead to nurse involvement.

MH expressed concern that ICVs sometimes identified detainees as vulnerable even when custody sergeants had not, noting that detainees could change their accounts or be influenced in harmful ways. He questioned who had the authority to review vulnerability and gave an example where an ICV's professional expertise provided stronger evidence than the custody sergeant's assessment. He stressed that this was a real issue and asked whether such cases should be referred to the Inspector for a decision.

INSP/A explained that vulnerability in custody was assessed in two stages: communication issues by the custody sergeant and further checks by the interviewing officer, ensuring such vulnerabilities were identified. He noted that self-harm might not be apparent at first but could be disclosed during an ICV visit, in which case it would be escalated immediately. While safeguards existed, he stressed that the custody sergeant held ultimate responsibility, adding that any vulnerabilities missed in custody would likely be identified later during court proceedings with the involvement of legal representatives.

NW raised concerns about healthcare practitioner provision, noting that South Wales Police (SWP) employed a custody contract manager to support this, and suggested that introducing a similar role could help monitor and improve the standard of HCP provision.

INSP/A described difficulties caused by healthcare professionals calling in sick at short notice, including a week with no nurse on duty, and explained that attempts to arrange overtime cover through Mitie had failed, leading to support being provided by SWP. He stressed

	the need to prevent such situations in future but acknowledged the challenges posed by sickness absence. NW added that it would be beneficial to record the service providers performance if the service was not meeting expectations.	
4.	Custody Update	
	INSP/A suggested the possibility of issuing access badges to ICVs that would allow entry into the custody unit's briefing room. From there, visitors could use a phone system to contact the admin team to allow entry, preventing them from being left outside in poor conditions. He explained that during a recent serious incident involving a murder, visitors had waited thirty minutes while staff managed thirty detainees with limited resources, highlighting the challenges this created. INSP/A asked if members wished him to explore the option further and report back at the next meeting. He explained that access would be restricted to a designated room with clear instructions on contacting staff via the phone system, and visitors could also reach the Inspector's office directly if one was on duty. He stressed that this was only a proposal under consideration, dependent on Estates' guidance, and made clear he was not making any promises. INSP/A to feedback at next meeting The meeting concluded that while the proposal could improve waiting arrangements, it did not resolve the issue of ensuring ICVs gained access to custody as quickly as required. Members highlighted the valuable role of ICVs, noting that detainees often shared their experiences with them and that officers should recognise the importance of this engagement. They stressed the need for transparency and consistency in the process, aligning with the Chief Constable's emphasis on connected communities, of which ICVs are a part. Detainees were seen to appreciate the opportunity to interact with someone outside of uniform, particularly when held for extended periods, as it could positively affect their mood. While initial reactions from detainees could sometimes be negative, they frequently responded well once ICVs explained their welfare-focused role, often opening and sharing information that was considered beneficial.	AA
5.	Any Other Business	
	No other business discussed.	

6.	Date of Next Meeting	
	The next meeting will be held at 6pm, 28th January 2026.	

My decision is as I have recorded in this paper

Signed



Date

04.08.2026

Contact Officer	
Name	Nicola Warren
Position	Senior Governance Officer and Volunteer Lead
Telephone	01633 642200
Email	Nicola.Warren@gwent.police.uk
Background papers	

