

DECISION NUMBER: PCCG 2026-006

OFFICE OF POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

TITLE: Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Annual Report 2025/2026

DATE: May 2026

TIMING: Annual

PURPOSE: For Monitoring Purposes

RECOMMENDATION

That the Police and Crime Commissioner considers the work of the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme during 2025/26.

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

The Independent Custody Visiting Scheme (the Scheme) is the system whereby volunteers attend police stations to check on the treatment of detainees, the conditions in which they are held, and that their rights and entitlements are being observed. It offers protection to both detainees and the police and provides reassurance to the community at large. This report summarises the invaluable work undertaken by our volunteers.

The responsibility for organising and overseeing the delivery of the Scheme resides with the Police and Crime (Commissioner) in consultation with the Chief Constable. The Commissioner has delegated the responsibility to the Chief Executive as referenced within the Manual of Corporate Governance. The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) is a member of the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA), a national organisation that works with OPCCs and the Home Office to support Schemes. Scheme arrangements within Gwent are based on Code C of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) and the Code of Practice for the Detention, Treatment and Questioning of persons by Police Officers.

Responsibility for the running of the Scheme sits with the Senior Governance Officer and Volunteer Lead Officer who is the Scheme Manager. This role includes oversight of the Scheme and the responsibility of ensuring that any issues raised are resolved. The Chief Executive is responsible for any complaints of misconduct raised against any Scheme members or by Scheme members. These matters may be delegated to the Scheme Manager or Head of Assurance and Compliance, where appropriate. The Assistant Scheme Administrator, a role held by the Administration Assistant, provides support to the Scheme Manager, arranging meetings, logging reports and providing a point of contact for Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs).

Custody staff work closely with the OPCC to consider ways of raising awareness of the custody visiting process. Both Custody and OPCC staff contribute to custody visiting training sessions and meetings.

Gwent Police has adopted a model of Child Centred Policing practice. Although children are sometimes detained in custody, steps have been taken to ensure the relevant agencies are involved from the outset to offer support to the child and that the cells used to detain children are located in a specific area which is segregated from the adult area. The Force also continues to work with other partner organisations to ensure appropriate safe and secure arrangements are put in place. Children are seen as a priority by ICVs during their visits.

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

ICVs carry out visits at Ystrad Mynach custody unit, with Newport used as an overflow unit when required. In July, one visit took place at Newport after detainees were transferred there due to heating issues at Ystrad Mynach.

ICVs visit custody in pairs at any time during the day or evening and their visits are unannounced. A rota is provided by the ICV Chair, although the ICVs themselves decide which day of the week and time to visit. The majority of the visits to custody were conducted during the weekdays, this is being monitored by the Scheme Manager.

A recruitment campaign began at the end of 2025. Following the departure of five ICVs, one in January and four in March 2026, and with a further ICV due to end their tenure later this year, the campaign was extended further into 2026 to help ensure a sufficient number of applicants to fill the vacancies. In the interim, the remaining five ICVs have been advised that visits can be conducted fortnightly as opposed to weekly as per ICVA guidance.

As part of the recruitment campaign, work has been undertaken to encourage representation from all local authority areas across Gwent. The Scheme Manager has continued to work with the Communication and Engagement Team to raise awareness of the Scheme and generate greater interest from under-represented areas, helping local communities to better understand the valuable contribution made by volunteers. A Recruitment Strategy has also been developed to support an increase in applications, which includes engagement with the Positive Outreach team.

The performance framework for the Scheme enables the capturing of data to map, amongst other things, visiting trends in custody and establish any issues that may need addressing such as custody records not being viewed, the number of detainees who require translators and whether female detainees are being offered menstrual products in accordance with the changes to PACE code C introduced on 21st August

2019. Updates on the performance framework are reported to each meeting by the Scheme Manager.

During the period 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026, a total of 9,301 people were detained in Gwent.

During visits made within this period:

- 532 people were detained in custody;
- 36 detainees refused a visit;
- 69 detainees were incapacitated, asleep or at interview;
- 71 detainees were observed; and
- 344 detainees accepted a visit. During two visits, 12 detainees were not seen because the unit was busy and the ICVs prioritised those most in need to ensure the visit remained effective.

ICVs gained entry to the Custody Suites within 15 minutes for the majority of the visits, there was one abandoned visit during the year, due to waiting for 30 minutes for entry as the custody unit was busy. This was raised as a matter of concern with the Custody Inspector.

There have been a few instances where ethnicity had not been reported. The Scheme Manager is monitoring this and ICVs have been reminded to ask the Force for the information during their visits.

The Scheme Manager conducted a review to identify whether there is any indication of disproportionality. A comparison is set out below.

During ICV visits in 2025/2026, there were 263 fewer detainees in custody compared to the previous year.

Based on the report forms completed, detainees were predominantly white men aged 18–49.

The number of detainees from ethnic minority backgrounds decreased slightly overall, although figures for Black or Black British, Asian or Asian British and Mixed ethnicity detainees remained broadly consistent with the previous year.

	2024-2025	2025-2026
Age 11 - 17 years	36	25
Age 18 - 34 years	249	194
Age 35 - 49 Years	207	163
Age 50 - 64 Years	44	66
Age 65 and over	6	14
Age not reported	51	28
Male	439	411
Female	112	70
Other	1	0
Gender not reported	0	0
White	458	380
Black or Black British	25	24
Asian or Asian British	19	17
Mixed	1	1
Other	20	28
Ethnicity not reported	48	32
Total detainees visited	1716	1453

During the 2025/26 financial year, 48 visits took place to check on the welfare of the detainees, 1 visit fewer than the previous year with 66% of the detainees accepting a visit.

As evidenced in appendix 1, the frequency of planned and actual visits differed slightly; 52 were planned and 48 took place. A number of scheduled visits were unintentionally

missed due to being overlooked and 1 visit was aborted due to waiting 30 minutes for entry to the unit. ICVs were reminded to advise the OPCC if they were unable to find cover due to sickness so assistance could be provided.

Any action taken by the OPCC resulting from ICV feedback is relayed to ICVs at their quarterly meetings. Anything more serious is referred immediately to the Custody Inspector. In order to ensure clarity around this, a formal reporting process is included in the Scheme handbook.

There were 156 minor issues raised over the course of the year, with the majority being in relation to detainees requesting water or food, a blanket, shower, to use the exercise yard, to see the nurse, to make a phone call or for a solicitor to be contacted. The issues raised were dealt with by the custody officers on duty immediately. There were also issues followed up with the Custody Inspector by the Scheme Manager including:

Issue: Visit aborted after a wait of more than 30 minutes to access the unit because it was busy.

Force response: The Inspector advised the newly appointed Custody Detention Officer that operational pressures were not an acceptable reason for the delay.

Issue: Some detainees had not been given a paper copy of their rights and entitlements during the visit.

Force response: The Inspector assured the Scheme Manager that this was resolved at the time and would continue to be monitored, as copies can be printed when needed.

Issue: A detainee was bruised following detention

Force Response: This was followed up by the ICVs during the visit with the Inspector who viewed the CCTV and confirmed that the detainee was violent and had to be restrained.

Issue: There was an instance where obtaining an Appropriate Adult for a 17-year-old detainee proved challenging. The detainee was unclothed and had requested to see a nurse. This matter was followed up with the Custody Inspector by the Scheme Manager on 4th September

Force response: The Inspector confirmed that the detainee was provided with two sets of clothing, the first set was soiled, and a second was then supplied. The detainee did see the nurse but declined an assessment, expressing a wish to leave. An Appropriate Adult was subsequently provided by the Youth Offending Service.

Issue: ICVs were not permitted to access detainees' custody records despite obtaining verbal consent. This change in process was introduced by the force without

prior consultation with the Scheme Manager. The Scheme Manager sought advice from the Force Data Protection Officer and the ICVA, which provided guidance from the National Police Chiefs' Council. The findings were then presented to the Force.

Force response: Having considered the findings, the Force agreed that the original process could resume, allowing ICVs to obtain verbal consent directly from detainees without the custody officer being within earshot.

Issue: During a visit in September, ICVs were provided with a verbal update, as it was not possible to print the ICV Report (Redacted Custody Record) without revealing personal data.

Force response: The Scheme Manager was assured the ICV Report would be provide going forward

Issue: The fridge temperature fluctuated, and there was a leak by the door, suggesting the seal was not working properly.

Force response: The Inspector monitored the issue and subsequently replaced the fridge.

There were 4 near misses (a dangerous occurrence which did not result in an injury or damage to property, but clearly could have done), and there were no deaths in custody. Processes have been put in place, where possible, to prevent issues from happening again.



The ICVA has a Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) for ICV Schemes to benchmark progress and achievements and to further enhance engagement with the PCC and local community. Initial assessment by the ICVA in 2018 saw Gwent OPCC awarded 'Code Compliant' status. The ICVA have undertaken a further review and awarded the OPCC Silver Compliance in September 2023, which has been maintained in 2025.

NEXT STEPS

To complete the recruitment process to ensure visits continue to take place on a weekly basis and statutory requirements are met.

The Scheme Manager will continue to monitor when the visits take place with any identified issues raised at ICV panel meetings.

We aim to achieve the gold compliance award in next year's ICVA Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) assessment in April 2026

To improve training processes with ICVs attending officer safety training.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

ICVs are appointed on a voluntary basis, there is no facility for financial remuneration. However, all reasonable travelling expenses are reimbursed with mileage paid at 45p per mile. Additional costs may include conferences and training.

The annual budget allocated for the scheme for 2025/26 was £5,132 which includes the subscription to ICVA of £1750. The actual cost of running the scheme during 2025/26 was £3,368, a breakdown of costs is included in the table below:

Account Description	Actual YTD (£)	Spend
Staff Course Fees	300	
ICVs Casual Mileage	1318	
Subscriptions - Organisational	1750	
Total:	3,368	

PERSONNEL CONSIDERATIONS

The Scheme is administered within the OPCC. The running of the Scheme is the responsibility of the Senior Governance Officer and Volunteer Lead as Scheme Manager. All administration of the Scheme is conducted by the Scheme Administrator.

Training for our ICVs is essential to ensure they remain up to date with legislative changes and have the knowledge and skills required to carry out their role effectively. The Scheme Manager delivers training sessions to support their development. An e-learning portal has been introduced by the ICVA to support ongoing learning, and the Scheme Manager has allocated online modules for ICVs to complete. In addition, a representative from the Appropriate Adult provider, Adferiad, attended the ICV panel meeting in April to deliver a presentation on vulnerable detainees in custody.

The Scheme Manager carries out three-yearly reviews for ICV members to identify any ongoing concerns or training needs.

ICVs also have access to the ICVA resources website, where they can view videos and use checklists to refresh their knowledge.

The Scheme Manager attended an online ICVA conference on 19 November 2025, which included discussion on the new e-learning system and reflective practice. This training has enabled Scheme Managers to monitor the completion of online learning modules.

Regular catch-up meetings were held with other Scheme Managers, alongside bi-monthly meetings with Regional Scheme Managers across Wales to share learning and best practice.

There may be resourcing implications resulting from the development of an Independent Custody Detention Scrutiny Panel in terms of OPCC staff and recruiting independent volunteers to participate in the panel.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 Part 3 Section 299 confirms the statutory requirement for the Commissioner to run an ICV scheme.

EQUALITIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

This report has been considered against the general duty to promote equality, as stipulated under the Strategic Equality Plan (the Plan) and has been assessed not to discriminate against any particular group.

Whilst due cognisance is given to the requirements of the Plan in the recruitment, training and operation of Custody Visiting, the over-riding consideration must be the health and safety of ICVs whilst undertaking their role. ICVs sign a volunteer agreement agreeing to inform the OPCC of any changes to their wellbeing or circumstances which could affect their ability to carry out visits.

Consideration has been given to requirements of the Articles contained in the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act 1998 in preparing this report. Human Rights matters and legislation are of vital importance when considering custody matters.

The 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 to better reflect the population of Gwent.

The demographics for the Scheme as of 31st March 2026 were as follows:

- 2 men and 3 women
- Ages range between mid 20s to 60s
- 5 white

Of the 5 ICVs, 1 has been on the Scheme since 2015, , 1 since 2021 and 3 since 2023. The maximum tenure for an ICV is nine years with reviews and re-appointment confirmed every three years. ICVs must have successfully completed 3 yearly reviews to remain on the scheme. One of the ICVs agreed to extend their tenure to provide cover during the pandemic and to allow additional ICVs to be appointed and trained. Therefore, their tenure is due to end during 2026.

Local Authority	Number of ICVs
Caerphilly	1
Monmouthshire	1
Newport	0

Torfaen	3
Blaenau Gwent	0

RISK

The risk of not providing a scheme is a breach of statutory duty and the failure to ensure that detainees are being treated appropriately could pose a reputational risk to both the OPCC and the Force.

PUBLIC INTEREST

This report will be made available to the public once it has been reviewed by the Police and Crime Commissioner.

CONTACT OFFICER

Nicola Warren, Scheme Manager

ANNEXES



appendix Annual
report 2025-26.xlsx

Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent

I confirm that I have considered whether or not I have any personal or prejudicial interest in this matter and take the proposed decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct.

The above request has my approval.

Signature:

04.08.2026

Date: