

ESSEX INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING SCHEME



ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	3
Police custody in Essex	4
Essex Independent Custody Visiting Scheme	7
Governance of the Essex ICV Scheme	15
Custody visiting data	17
Essex ICV scheme findings	22
Other areas of note / special events	25
Future plans	29
Further information and contact details	30

ANNUAL REPORT FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the Annual Report for the Essex Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) Scheme for 2023/24.

This year has seen a continued commitment from our dedicated team of Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) who play a vital role in ensuring the welfare of detainees in Essex Police custody. Their work is independent and impartial, providing a crucial link between detainees and the Police.

The number of visits conducted by ICVs has increased compared to the previous two years. With 210 visits completed in 2023/24, this represents an average of 18 visits per month – a rise from the 16 visits per month in 2022/23. This upward trend demonstrates the ICV Scheme's commitment to comprehensive oversight, offering greater reassurance to detainees and fostering transparency within the custody process.

It's important to acknowledge the challenges faced by the custody estate during this period. Planned renovations and refurbishments within custody suites temporarily reduced available capacity. Additionally, some suites were occasionally closed for standard deep cleans. Despite this, our ICVs remained dedicated to maintaining a robust visiting schedule, ensuring detainees continued to have access to this vital service. It is reassuring that the detainees who were spoken to by ICVs gave overall positive feedback, regarding their treatment during their time in custody. Where issues arose, ICVs felt confident in being able to raise these concerns with custody staff. Matters raised were appropriately listened to and where possible, acted on immediately, or as soon as possible.

I am grateful for the continued hard work and professionalism of our ICVs. Their commitment to upholding detainee welfare is commendable. This report provides a valuable insight into their work and the positive impact they have to the well-being of those held in police custody.



ROGER HIRST

**POLICE, FIRE AND
CRIME
COMMISSIONER FOR
ESSEX**

POLICE CUSTODY IN ESSEX

Across Essex, we currently have seven operational custody suites. These suites are located at Chelmsford, Clacton, Colchester, Basildon, Southend, Grays, and Harlow. Each suite has its own team of Custody Sergeants and Detention Officers as well as Custody Inspectors.

One Custody Commander Chief Inspector has overall responsibility for Custody in Essex.

Each custody suite is well equipped with food and drink provision, clothing and blankets as well as religious and reading materials. The figure below shows a total number of cells available in each custody suite.

Figure 1. Number of custody cells available in each custody suite in Essex.

District	Police Station	Number of cells
Chelmsford	Chelmsford	15
Tendring	Clacton	10
Colchester	Colchester	14
Basildon	Basildon	20
Southend	Southend	30
Thurrock	Grays	17
Harlow	Harlow	12
	Total	118

Due to planned renovation and refurbishment, a number of custody suites were closed in 2023/24. Additionally, some custody suites occasionally closed for no more than 24 hours for a standard deep clean of the suite.

The figure on the next page shows which custody suites were closed for planned works.

Chelmsford and Southend custody suites have recently been refurbished and are considered the newest suites in the county.

Over the course of 2024/25, there are plans for the remaining custody suites in Essex to be fully refurbished with a new CCTV system installed.

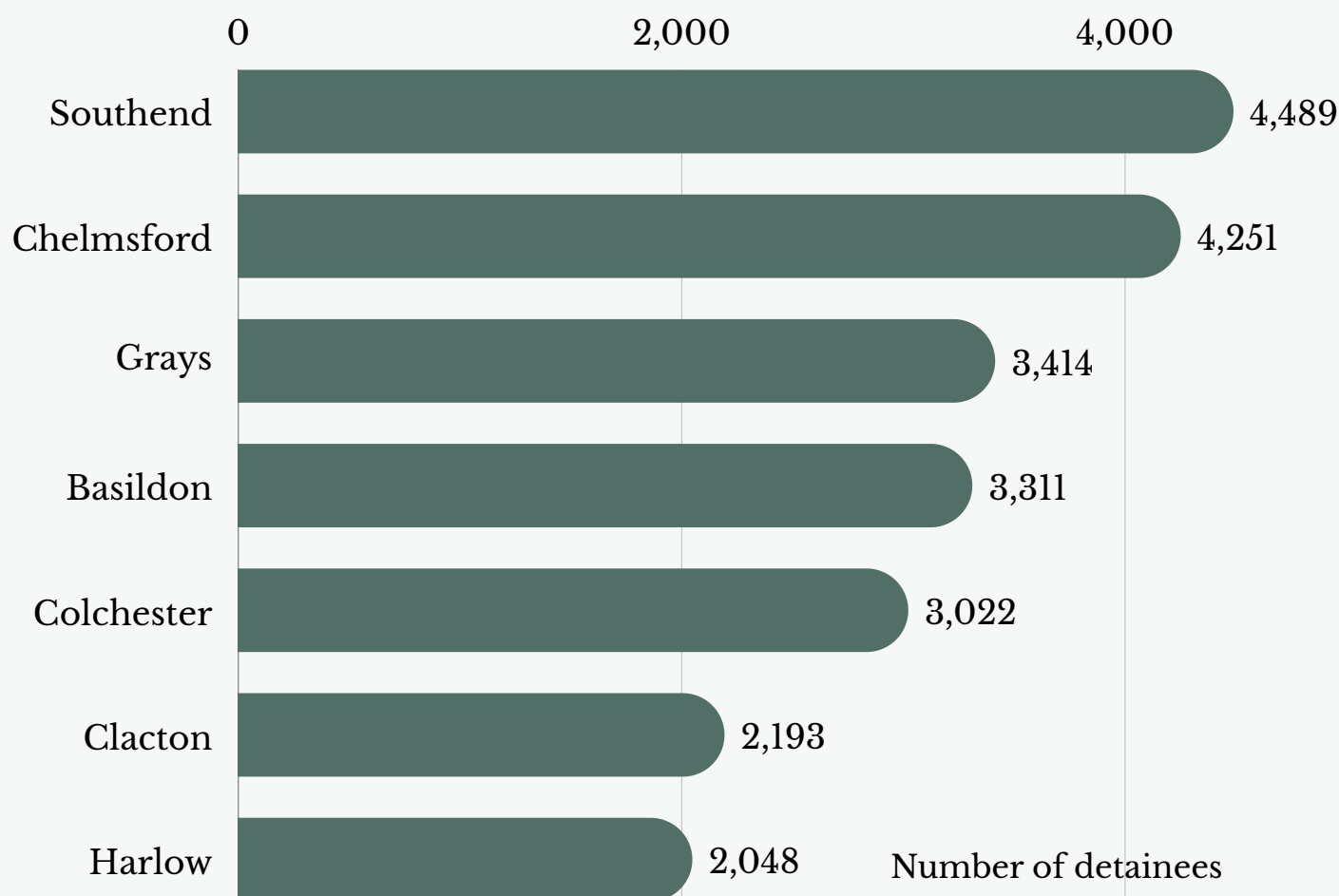
Figure 2. Essex custody suites closing and opening times for refurbishment and renovation in 2023/24.

Month / Suite	Basildon	Grays	Chelmsford	Clacton	Colchester	Harlow	Southend
April 2023	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN	CLOSED	OPEN
May 2023	OPEN / CLOSED	OPEN / CLOSED	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN	CLOSED	OPEN
June 2023	CLOSED	CLOSED	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN	CLOSED	OPEN
July 2023	OPEN	OPEN / CLOSED	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN / CLOSED	OPEN / CLOSED	OPEN
August 2023	OPEN	OPEN / CLOSED	OPEN	OPEN	CLOSED	OPEN	OPEN
September 2023	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN	CLOSED	OPEN	OPEN
October 2023	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN	CLOSED	OPEN	OPEN
November 2023	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN / CLOSED	OPEN / CLOSED	OPEN / CLOSED	OPEN
December 2023	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN	CLOSED	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN
January 2024	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN	CLOSED	OPEN	OPEN / CLOSED	OPEN
February 2024	OPEN / CLOSED	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN / CLOSED
March 2024	CLOSED	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN

In total 22,728 detainees went through Essex Police custody between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024. This is a 4.4% decrease compared to 23,781 in 2022/23 and 2.3% decrease compared to 23,251 in 2021/22.

The figure below shows the volume of detainees that went through each Essex Police custody suite.

Figure 3. Custody volume in each Essex Police custody suite between April 2023 and March 2024.



Southend custody suite proved to be the busiest suite with 4,489 detainees booked in between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024 and Harlow being the least busy with 2,048 detainees booked in.

ESSEX INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING SCHEME

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) for Essex's Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) Scheme appoints volunteers from the public to visit police custody suites to check on the treatment of detainees and the conditions in which they are held; that their rights and entitlements are being observed, and that their detention is compliant with the Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) Act 1984 Code C ([Pace Code C 2019](#)) and is in line with Detention and Custody Authorised Professional Practice ([APP](#)). It offers protection and confidentiality to both detainees and the police and reassurance to the community at large.

The scheme introduced by the Police and Crime Commissioner in 2012 is based on the [Home Office Code of Practice on Independent Custody Visiting](#) published pursuant to Section 51(6) of the Police Reform Act 2002. The scheme was last significantly updated in 2013, following the issue of the Code of Practice on Independent Custody Visiting by the Home Office in March of that year.

The scheme is supported by, and compliant with, more detailed national standards that expand the relevant procedures and set out established good practice. The [national standards](#) set out the general guidelines under which the Essex ICV scheme operates.

The scheme enables appointed volunteers to visit police station custody suites at any time of the day or night, to check on the treatment of detainees, the conditions in which they are held and that their rights and entitlements are being observed. Each Independent Custody Visitor is required to commit to carrying out a minimum of three visits to custody suites per month and completes and submits a standard report after each visit.

Visits must be undertaken in pairs for health and safety reasons and generally last no more than an hour. It is important that ICVs are able to compare different custody suites and the standards within them, so they visit more than one suite in their relevant geographical cluster and at varying times of the day and of the week wherever possible.

WE SAID, WE DID

In last year's report we committed ourselves to a number of objectives around recruitment, promotion of the scheme and performance management. The figure below summarises what we said we would do and how we have achieved it.

Figure 4. A summary of the Essex ICV schemes objectives for 2022/23 and the subsequent action taken to ensure successful delivery.

We Said	We Did
<p>Promote the service across the county by actively participating in internal and external events.</p>	<p>We have attended two career fairs at local universities (October 2023 & March 2024) and represented Essex ICV Scheme in a number of events, including the PFCC Conference in Boreham and the Blue Light Conference in Chelmsford.</p>
<p>Recruit and train at least five new ICVs.</p>	<p>Two training sessions were held in 2023/24, one in June 2023 and the other one in November 2023. In total, six new ICVs were recruited and trained.</p>
<p>Meet the agreed target of completed visits to custody suites per month.</p>	<p>2023/24 has seen a number of custody suites being closed throughout the year which significantly impacted the number of visits being completed. Given the custody suite closure, we were able to meet the KPI in eight months, leaving four months where we were unable to complete the agreed number of visits.</p>
<p>Establish and actively participate in Custody Scrutiny Panels, chaired by the PFCC.</p>	<p>The Custody Independent Advisory Group has been established and Essex ICV is an active member of the group. Custody Scrutiny Panels are being established with Terms of Reference completed and planned first meetings in the second quarter of 2024.</p>
<p>Arrange and host 2023 ICV Regional Conference.</p>	<p>2023 ICV Regional Conference hosted by Essex was held in November 2023 in Chelmsford which attracted more than 60 people across the region.</p>

Over the last year, a number of recruitment campaigns attracted 34 email enquiries, of those 13 applications were received, 10 interviews took place and eight new applicants were successfully recruited to the scheme. Of these some are still awaiting vetting or training. This increased the total number of active ICVs in Essex to 19 volunteers.

However, throughout 2023/24, two ICVs left the role due to personal circumstances and commitments. This reduced the total number of active ICVs in Essex to 17 volunteers (for 2022/23, ended the year with 16).

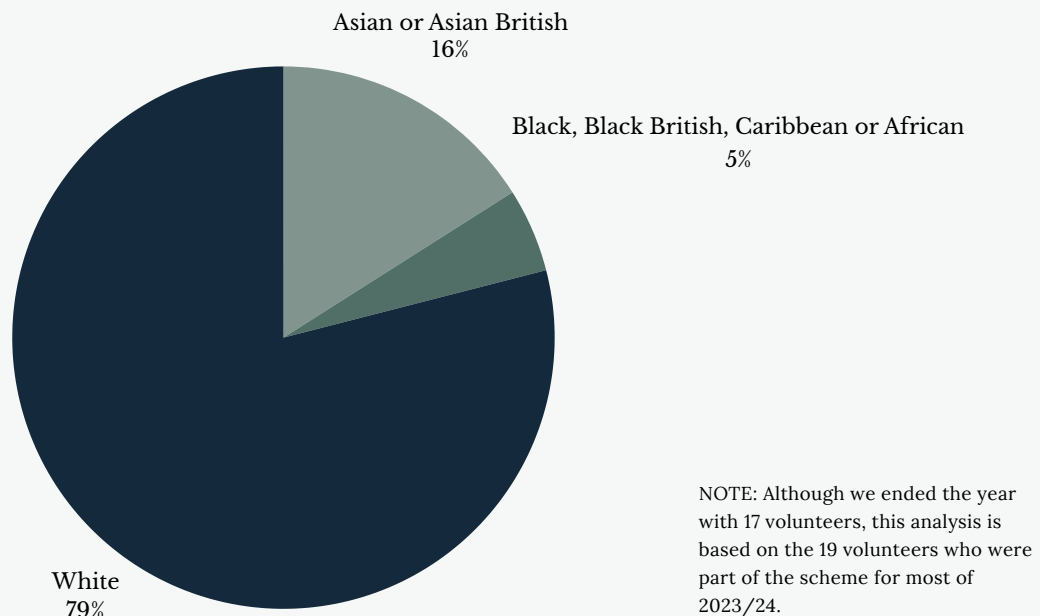
Demographic Profile

Ethnicity

In line with the composition of the county, the ethnicity of ICVs is predominantly White British, but recruitment in 2023 successfully attracted more diverse members to the scheme (21%). The figure below shows the current ethnic representation of the Essex ICV volunteers.

According to the 2021 census, 11.2% of the Essex population were from a minority ethnic background.

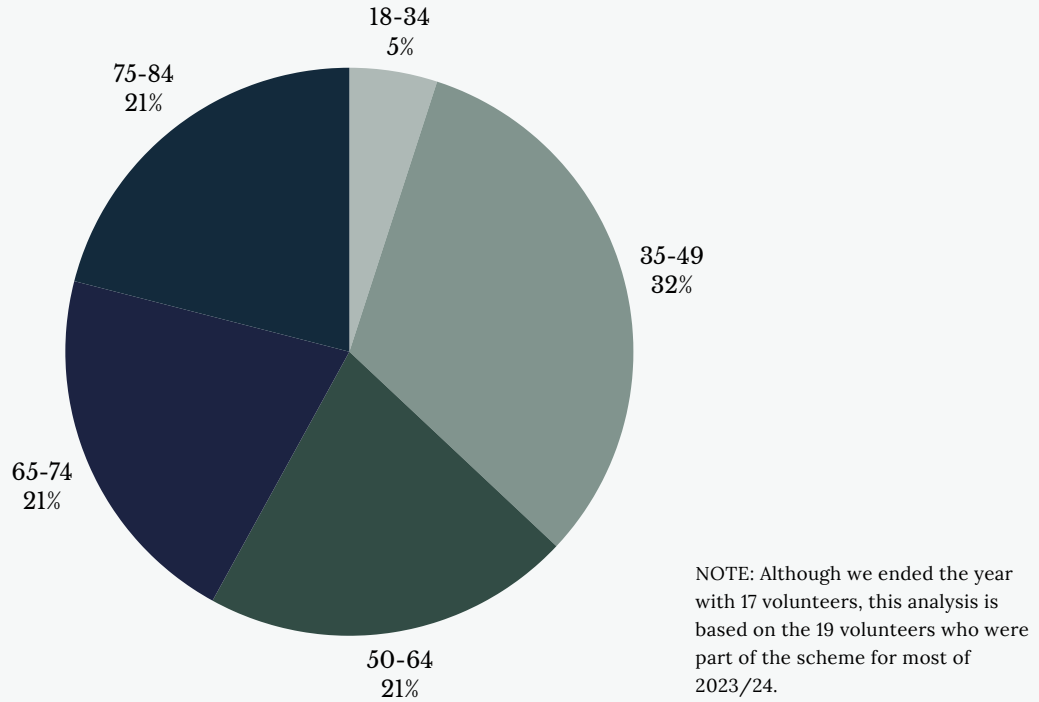
Figure 5. Ethnic groups representation in the Essex ICV Scheme between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024.



Age

Of the Essex ICVs, 42% are within the age range of 65-84 years old, although the recent recruitment campaign attracted more candidates from younger age groups. The figure below shows the age representation for the Essex ICV scheme.

Figure 6. Age representation in the Essex ICV Scheme between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024.



In the 2022/23 financial year, the average age of Essex ICV was 59 years old. According to the 2021 census, the average age in Essex was 42. Younger volunteers appear to be under-represented in the Essex ICV Scheme, with the average age of Essex Independent Custody Visitors being 57.9 years old.

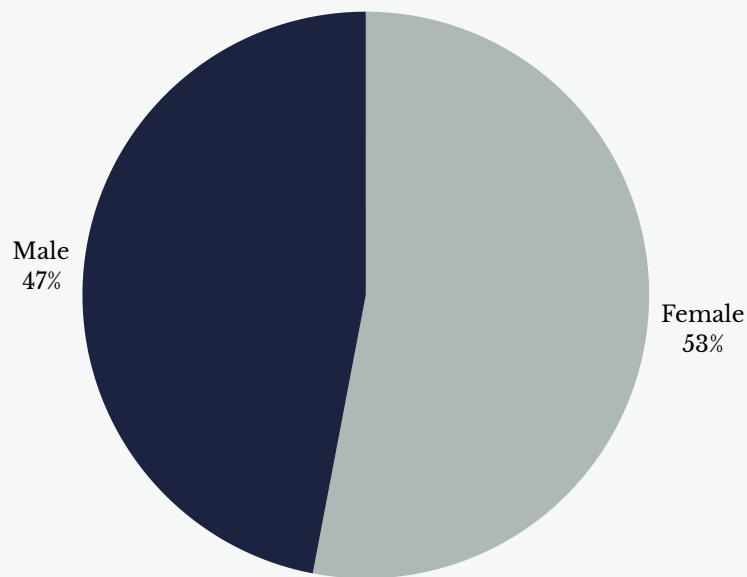
We will seek to attract candidates from a variety of age groups through future recruitment campaigns.

Gender and Sex

Nine of the Essex ICV volunteers are male and 10 are female. The figure below provides a breakdown of the gender of the members of the Essex ICV Scheme.

According to the 2021 census, the Essex population was 51.3% female and 48.7% male.

Figure 7. Gender and Sex representation in the Essex ICV Scheme between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024.



NOTE: Although we ended the year with 17 volunteers, this analysis is based on the 19 volunteers who were part of the scheme for most of 2023/24.

Training

A new induction training package for the ICVs in Essex has been developed to ensure all new ICVs are sufficiently equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to complete ICV visits successfully. New ICVs are required to participate in this two-day training which includes the history of the ICV scheme, legislation around the scheme, detainees' vulnerability, a tour of a custody suite and data protection training. All new ICVs are required to pass the assessment at the end of the training.

In 2023/24, we held two sessions of the induction training, one in June 2023 and then again in November 2023. After successfully passing the induction training, all new ICVs enter a probation period of six months. ICV Mentors (the most experienced ICVs) will accompany the new ICVs during the probationary period.

The Essex ICVs are kept updated on current and relevant issues across the UK as well as matters in custody via regular newsletters from the ICV Manager, which also includes any information provided by the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA).

Our ICVs also attend other training events and are encouraged to complete online courses, which are provided as part of ICVA's bitesize training plan. The training of our ICVs completed during 2022/23 included:

- Women in Police Custody
- Religious Items in Custody
- Custody Detention Clocks
- Racism in Custody and Policing
- Equality and Bias
- Equality in Public Sector Duty
- Observations, Reviews and Rousals (in custody)
- Menopause Awareness
- Detainee Rights (Policing overview)
- Detainee Rights (Solicitor's perspective)
- Introduction to Dignity
- Arrivals and Booking in Process

In 2023/24 there was additional internal training for ICVs relating to PFCC Mandatory Data Protection training, Essex Bystander training and Personal Safety training.

Volunteer Appreciation

To say “thank you” to our volunteers, the PFCC organises a series of events to express his gratitude for the work and support given.

In December 2023, volunteers met together for a Christmas lunch which was an opportunity for the group to socialise and strengthen the relationships.

The annual PFCC Volunteer Appreciation event took place on Saturday 13 May 2023, when volunteers were invited to participate in a day full of activities and enjoy talks from guest speakers. As part of the annual event, volunteers are awarded for special contributions towards the scheme. In 2023, ten Essex ICVs received awards in categories such as PFCC Volunteer of the year, Special Mention and Long Service award.

One of our ICVs received a 10 Years of Service award, two of our ICVs received 20 years of service award and two received a Special Mention award.

Additionally, we organise a small token of appreciation for each volunteer during national Volunteer Week.

Volunteer Feedback

As part of our annual Volunteer Feedback survey, we asked our volunteers how they feel about the role and their volunteering experience.

A summary of their responses:

- When asked if they find the work interesting, challenging and rewarding, 100% responded YES,
- The ability to make a difference and discussions with detainees were most often cited when asked what volunteers like best about the role,
- 100% of volunteers said that the training received was either good or very good,
- 100% of volunteers said that the support they received was either good or very good.

Finally, the next page summarises how our volunteers responded when asked how they feel whilst volunteering with Essex ICV Scheme:

Working with the office staff while doing my ICV items make me feel part of the office team. Thank you everyone.

I think that the 'PFCC' has done a remarkable job not just to keep the scheme functioning but to develop how we work. Keep up the excellent work!



The scheme is very well organised and I feel very valued.

I love that the role brings a lot of valuable opportunities to understand how Essex Police operates and detainees are looked after whilst they are in custody.

GOVERNANCE OF THE ESSEX ICV SCHEME

Overall responsibility for the administration of the scheme is held by the Chief Executive to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex, with day-to-day management of the scheme undertaken by the ICV Scheme Manager. The ICV Scheme Manager reports to the Chief Financial Officer and Strategic Head of Performance and Resources, who also has oversight of the Essex ICV Scheme.

The ICV Manager is responsible for monitoring the performance and webpages to ensure the effective organisation and running of the scheme. They are also responsible for recruitment, appointment, training, management, supervision, and re-accreditation of ICVs.

An ICV Volunteer Coordinator is appointed to act as a first point of contact for volunteers and to support the ICV Manager with administrative tasks relating to the day-to-day management of the scheme.

Three ICV Mentors were appointed in 2023 to act as a 'buddy' to new visitors and responsible for their practical training during their six months probation. At the end of the probation period, ICV Mentors meet with the ICV Manager to discuss performance of the probationers. Feedback received from these assessments are a basis for the end of probation assessments held with the ICV Manager at the end of the six months probation period.

After each visit to custody, ICVs complete a report which provides a current picture of the custody suite, and any issues that the ICV has identified relating to the maintenance standards of the facility, and the rights and welfare of those detained in custody. Systems are in place to ensure that the output from visits is immediately available to the ICV Manager. The ICV Scheme Manager is responsible for drawing together issues and identifying trends emerging from visits and addressing these with relevant police representatives. A regular place to provide feedback has been established and, every month, the ICV monthly report is shared with ICVs, the PFCC's Chief Executive, the PFCC's Chief Financial Officer, the Essex Police's Criminal Justice Command team, Custody Managers and the Essex Police Estate & Facilities department in order to enable a regular monitoring and sharing of information, and an opportunity for a quick and efficient response to any issues or concerns raised by ICVs.

Additionally, monthly online meetings are held with the Custody Chief Inspector, Estates lead manager and Criminal Justice Command Officer to monitor any areas of concern and to strengthen the relationship between the Essex ICV Scheme[JP41] and Essex Police.

Internally, the Essex ICV Scheme holds four team meetings each year to enable all ICVs to come together to discuss the progress made so far, trends in identified custody and any further developments.

ESCALATION PROCESS

The Essex ICV Scheme has adopted ICVA's escalation process in relation to concerns or complaints received by our ICVs. In essence, the Essex ICV Scheme identifies four levels of the issues and concerns escalation process:

- ICV Visit (level 1)
- ICV Manager (level 2)
- PFCC (level 3)
- ICVA (level 4)

The full escalation process is explained in the Essex ICV Policy which can be accessed [here](#).

This escalation process provides a clear understanding of how the concerns raised by ICVs are addressed and resolved. This process is also part of the ICV induction training so all new ICVs understand what is expected of them and how the concerns raised will be actioned.

CUSTODY VISITING DATA

A total of 210 custody visits were completed last year (181 in 2022/23 and 175 in 2021/22).

The Essex ICV Scheme made, on average, a total of 18 visits to Essex Police' custody suites per month during 2023/24, (16 in 2022/23 and 15 in 2021/22).

Chelmsford's custody suite received the most visits, with 39 during the year. Harlow received the fewest, with 22. A full breakdown of the visits can be seen in in the figure below.

It is also worth noting at some custody suites were closed for necessary renovation and refurbishment and visits did not take place during custody closure. Please see Figure 2. for more information.

Each custody suite should be visited three times a month, at different times of day and different days of the week. In order to achieve this, each ICV commits to making three visits per month.

Figure 8. Number of ICV visits completed between April 2023 and March 2024 and their comparison to previous years.

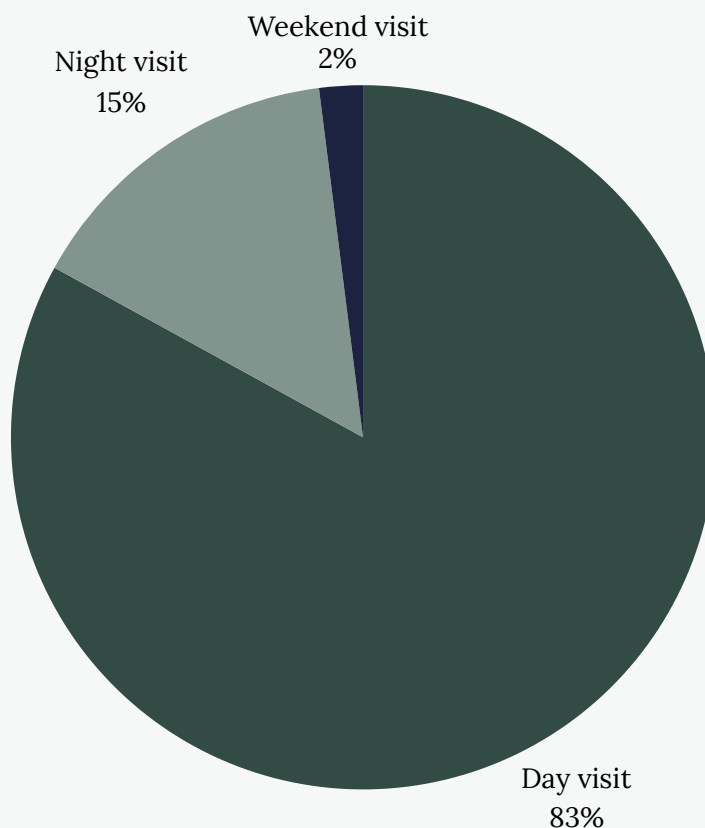
Month / Suite	Basildon	Grays	Chelmsford	Clacton	Colchester	Harlow	Southend	Total
Apr 23	3	2	3	3	3	0	3	17
May 23	1	0	4	2	3	0	4	14
Jun 23	0	2	3	2	3	0	2	12
Jul 23	3	3	4	3	2	1	4	20
Aug 23	3	3	4	4	0	3	3	20
Sep 23	3	4	3	4	0	3	3	20
Oct 23	2	4	4	3	0	3	3	19
Nov 23	3	3	4	0	3	2	4	19
Dec 23	3	3	1	0	4	2	3	16
Jan 24	3	3	3	0	3	3	3	18
Feb 24	1	3	3	3	2	2	3	17
Mar 24	0	3	3	3	3	3	3	18
2023/24	25	33	39	27	26	22	38	210
2022/23	28	26	22	25	28	22	30	181
2021/22	27	27	13	27	28	25	28	175

Visiting times

All ICVs are expected to follow a visiting rota which is compiled by the ICV Coordinator. ICVs are allocated a custody suite, the number of visits required and a co-visitor to complete visits with. They are asked to log their visits on the team calendar to ensure visits take place throughout the whole month and at various times of day.

The time visited is recorded as either 'day visit', 'night visit' or 'weekend visit'. The figure below provides a breakdown of the 210 visits completed in relation to the time when the visit was completed.

Figure 9. Custody visiting times by the Essex ICV Scheme volunteers between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024.



The trend of visits indicates that day visits are preferable to the ICVs.

In 2022/23, 72% of visits were completed during the day, 19% at the weekend and 9% at night.

An area for development is to encourage more weekend and night visits in 2024/25.

Visits Profile

During the 210 visits completed, ICVs saw 1,274 detainees in total, and spoke directly to 501 of them. 28 detainees declined the offer to speak to an ICV (31 refused in 2022/23). The continued work of the ICVs in being able to introduce themselves and build a rapport with detainees is a key aspect to creating a comprehensive dialogue and to understanding how detainees feel about their time whilst held in custody.

450 detainees were sleeping at the time of an ICV visit. Generally, the detainee are not expected to be woken for an ICV visit (unless there is a concern for their welfare). Although ICVs did not speak to the sleeping detainees observations were made and the visits were recorded.

The remainder of detainees were unavailable for an ICV a visit, for a number of reasons including being in hospital, in an interview, or a meeting with their solicitor. Figure below shows a full overview of the visits completed.

Figure 10. Detainee's visits profile recorded by ICVs between April 2023 and March 2024.

Details	Number
Spoken to	501
Asleep (but observed)	450
Refused the visit	28
Not seen (operational reasons) / cell observed	238
Not seen (detainee away) / cell observed	57
Total	1,274

‘Not seen (operational reasons)’ includes those detainees who were either at an interview or meeting their solicitor at the time of the ICV visit. ‘Not seen (detainee away)’ means that detainee was either in hospital or in court at the time of the ICV visit. On both occasions, ICVs observed the cells and reported findings accordingly.

Terrorism Act Custody (TACT) detainees

We have a special group of ICVs who are qualified to visit Terrorism Act Custody (TACT) facilities and speak to suspected terrorist detainees.

Unlike mainstream custody visits, TACT visits tend to be pre-arranged as there are relatively few TACT detainees and random visits are unlikely to result in visiting them. When a TACT detainee is booked into Essex custody, Essex Police will contact the ICV Scheme Manager as soon as practicable and an ICV visit will be arranged. TACT suspects can remain in detention for up to 14 days and ICVs will visit throughout this time (sometimes every day).

TACT qualified ICVs are experienced visitors who have completed at least 18 months of regular visiting. They have additional security clearance and attend additional specialist training.

Due to the security and confidentiality of those TACT detained, we are unable to provide more details around Essex ICV visits to TACT detainees.

ESSEX ICV SCHEME FINDINGS

Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024 our ICVs raised a total of 262 issues relating to matters such as estate maintenance (73%), IT issues in respect of custody (25%) and custody provision (2%). Examples of the issues raised include fly infestation, taps leaking, faulty door locks, faulty intercoms and CCTV not properly working.

All issues identified were collated into themes which are presented in figure below along with the subsequent action taken.

Figure 11. A summary of the issues identified and subsequent action taken.

Matters raised by ICVs and the subsequent action taken		
Theme	Matter identified	Action taken
ICV awareness	A small number of reports submitted mentioned custody staff/officers not being fully aware of the role and remit of the ICVs.	Discussed with the Head of Essex Police Custody and reasons identified for lack of awareness were high turnover of staff, inadequate training during induction of new staff members and low ICV visibility. As a result, the ICV Scheme Manager along with the ICV Coordinator are included in the induction training to all new custody staff, officers and sergeants to increase the awareness of the ICV role.
Custody provision	A small number of reports mentioned limited or low supplies in the custody suites, mainly around clothing equipment (such as gloves) and distraction items (such as soft balls).	Discussed with the relevant Custody Manager who explained low stock was due to either the order being delivered late or items being destroyed by the detainees. Each item has been promptly replaced.

Matters raised by ICVs and the subsequent action taken

Theme	Matter identified	Action taken
IT	<p>Concerns relating to IT were mentioned in 66 reports. These included, fire alarms not working, CCTV not operating correctly or computer screens not working.</p>	<p>Concerns relating to CCTV issues are part of the bigger consultation which led to each custody suite being refurbished with new CCTV system installed. All works are expected to be completed in 2025. Other IT issues were raised internally with IT engineers and each issue was promptly resolved.</p>
Estate Maintenance	<p>Most of the issues raised by the ICV relates to maintenance concerns in custody suites. These issues include showers out of use, taps leaking, flaky paint (which poses a ligature risk), toilets out of use, cells out of use due to locks not working and fly infestation.</p>	<p>Discussed with Head of Custody and a new system of reporting and monitoring has been put in place, where the ICV Manager meets every month with a designated representative from the Custody Command, IT and Estate Maintenance teams to address each concern raised. This has led to a significant improvement of 70% of issues being resolved within the first week of raising them. The remaining 30% usually require an external provider to resolve the issue but are usually resolved within the first month of being raised.</p>
Reporting	<p>A small number of ICV reports were lost after the ICV visit took place, partly due to documents being misplaced in the custody suite.</p>	<p>A proposal to move to online reporting has been agreed. This should ensure each report will be delivered safely to the ICV office team., The online reporting system is expected to be in place by the end of 2024.</p>

Detainee's Welfare

Overall Essex ICVs reported receiving positive feedback from detainees about their treatment while in custody. Most detainees understood their rights and entitlements and understood why they had been detained. Those who did not were offered a paper copy of their Rights and Entitlements to read whilst in custody.

Several detainees made positive remarks about their welfare whilst in custody. Some of the reports mentioned efficient support being offered whilst others reported feeling respected whilst being in custody. Some reports praised custody staff for being friendly and non-judgmental.

Essex ICVs did not report any significant abuse or neglect of detainees' welfare in 2023/24.

Overall organisational relationship

The Essex ICV Scheme has a positive relationship with Essex Police custody staff with mutual respect. ICVs feel welcome in the custody suites and any matters raised at the time of the visit are discussed and, if possible, addressed immediately.

Access to medical assistance on site

Access to onsite medical assistance has improved with a renewed contract provider in place. ICVs reported far fewer issues being raised by detainees and custody staff and ICVs regularly report that detainees had already been seen by medical staff or were due to imminently and that any regular medication had been noted and was made accessible.

OTHER AREAS OF NOTE AND SPECIAL EVENTS

ICVA MEMBERSHIP AND ACCREDITATION

The ICVA is funded by the Home Office and Police (Fire) and Crime Commissioners [P(F)CCs]. ICVA supports ICV schemes across the country to deliver effective oversight of police custody to ensure a safe environment in custody and to deliver public reassurance. ICVA's suite of training materials equips ICVs with an in-depth knowledge of the most up to date best practice required to fulfil their role, from interpersonal communication skills to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE).

The Essex ICV Scheme is a member of the ICVA and has maintained Silver Accreditation on their recent Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) in October 2023. Members of the Essex ICV Scheme attended the official ICVA QAF ceremony event in Birmingham in November 2023 to personally accept the award.

ICVA's training materials are used to help build and maintain the knowledge and skills of local ICVs, and news items and other updates received from ICVA are shared with local ICVs through a weekly newsletter.

The Essex ICV scheme shares quarterly statistics with ICVA and includes examples of good practice and highlights any areas of local concern.

The ICV Manager may contact the ICVA to raise any substantial concerns that occur locally for advice, support, and comparison with other schemes where required. ICVA can approach the Home Office, National Police Chief Council (NPCC) and other national organisations to articulate problems and resolve issues. During the period between April 2023 and March 2024 there were no substantial concerns raised.



Picture 1. The Essex ICV Scheme was awarded Silver Accreditation at the ICVA Award Ceremony in Birmingham in November 2023. From the left: Sherry Ralph (ICVA CEO), Katarzyna Grabka (Essex ICV Manager), Richard Wicks (Essex ICV Coordinator), Dame Anne Owers (ICVA Chair).

PFCC ICV SHADOW VISIT

In June 2023 the PFCC, accompanied our ICVs during one of their visits. Two ICVs, along with Mr Hirst visited Chelmsford custody suite. Mr Hirst had discussions with a number of detainees around their rights and entitlements being upheld.

You can read more about the PFCC visit to the custody suite [here](#).



Picture 2. Mr Roger Hirst visiting the Chelmsford custody suite, June 2023.

ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY EVENTS

The Essex ICV Scheme has also been represented at a number of community events to increase the presence and the profile of the scheme. We have attended various career events to promote the role of our ICVs (such as a University Career Fair in October 2023 and in March 2024, the Blue Light Conference in October 2023 and a Witham community event in February 2024).

ICV TRAINING TO CUSTODY

In 2023/24 we also focused on delivering ICV training to custody staff and custody officers. With the highly successful Essex Police recruitment campaign, a significant number of new applicants joined the force. We have worked with Essex police to ensure that as part of their induction training, information is provided about the ICV scheme, the role of the ICVs and their responsibilities. We have held three training sessions and trained 18 custody staff/officers.

ICV REGIONAL CONFERENCE

In October 2023, Essex hosted the annual regional conference, in which all regional ICV schemes were invited to participate.

Over 60 attendees across the Eastern region took part in the event which focused on promoting the work of ICVs and provided opportunity to discuss the latest national developments and ensure attendees were able to share best practises.

Amongst guests speakers invited was the ICVA CEO Sherry Ralph, Head of Essex Police Custody Command, Glenn Caron, and a speaker who talked about his own experience about a visit from ICV when he was arrested and how their visit helped him understand the importance of custody visiting. The event concluded with a dog display from Essex County Fire and Rescue Service.

All attendees said it was a worthwhile event and the speakers were engaging.



Picture 3. ICV Regional Conference group photograph.

It was well organised with very friendly staff. The dog exhibition was fantastic. Well done!

Kudos to organisers for being able to prepare such a great event!

Enjoyed the day, thank you. Lived experience speaker was really good. Lots to think about and consider for future visiting

Had a difficult journey from Suffolk due to flooding which took me extra time to get through Saturday traffic but it was so worth it! Thank you!

It was a fantastic event! I thoroughly enjoyed it and learnt a lot from the guest speakers. It was also really good to meet other ICVs from other areas.

Really interesting and varied topics, lovely till the end with the dogs. It was very informative and I've learned a lot of interesting things.

FUTURE PLANS

Our main objectives for the year 2024/25 are



INCREASE AWARENESS ACROSS THE COUNTY OF THE SCHEME AND VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITY THAT IT PROVIDES.



RECRUIT AND TRAIN AT LEAST FIVE NEW ICVS.



ENCOURAGE MORE WEEKEND AND NIGHT VISITS.



ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN CUSTODY INDEPENDENT ACTION GROUP MEETINGS AND SUPPORT ANY FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF POTENTIAL SCRUTINY PANELS.



ESTABLISH AND INCORPORATE ICV ONLINE REPORTING SYSTEM.

If you would like to know more about the scheme, please contact us on:



Essex Independent Custody Scheme
Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for
Essex
Kelvedon Park
London Road
Rivenhall
Witham
Essex
CM8 3HB



01245 261600



ICV.Scheme@essex.police.uk



<http://www.essex.pfcc.police.uk>



@EssexPFCC

Useful websites:

- [ICVA \(Independent Custody Visiting Association\)](#)
- [National Preventative Mechanism](#)
- [Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation](#)