



ESSEX INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING SCHEME 2018/19 ANNUAL REPORT

Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex

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OPFCC
Kelvedon Park

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Foreword by Roger Hirst, Police and Crime Commissioner for Essex



Welcome to the 2018/2019 Essex Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) Scheme Annual Report, which incorporates visits taking place from April 1st 2018 to March 31st 2019. The Independent Custody Visiting Scheme in Essex provides oversight and accountability at eight police custody suites situated across the county. Our volunteers are all members of the public who have undergone training that equips them to go unannounced into custody suites and check on the welfare and dignity of detainees. Bridging the gap between custody staff and detainees, means ICVs are able to raise concerns as well as highlight good practice taking place.

This year saw the implementation of the Independent Custody Visiting Association's (ICVA) Quality Assurance Framework, which has helped lift the standards of the scheme on a national level. Essex was peer assessed and awarded 'silver', which recognises the scheme as providing a good standard of provision.

I was pleased that overall detainees were happy with how they were treated in custody, and of the concerns that were raised none were of a serious nature. Improving the dignity of detainees continues to be a priority through the efforts of ICVA and Essex Police Custody Command. This year ICVs in Essex have worked with police to improve the reporting and recording of detainee vulnerability and access to personal effects as well as encouraging good interpersonal relationships by custody staff with detainees. The scheme will continue to review and develop these reporting and recording systems as new themes emerge.

I would like to personally thank the commitment and efforts of all the ICV Scheme volunteers who visit custody suites week in and week out, without whom this important work would not be possible.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Hirst', written in a cursive style.

Roger Hirst
Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex

Executive Summary for Essex

- The Essex Police area covers 3,670km²
- The population is 1.468 million
- Ethnicity is 90.8% British, 3.6% Other White, 2.5% Asian, 1.3% Black, 1.5% Mixed, 0.3% Other
- There are eight custody suites located across Essex
- The number of detainees going through custody is reducing due to changes in bail conditions brought in in
- The majority of issues raised by ICVs were around access to translation services and medics in custody as well as estate issues such as aging suites, faulty CCTV, toilets not flushing and buzzers out of action
- Of the 503 detainees available for interview in 2018/19, the majority were happy with their treatment in custody

The Essex ICV Scheme

Introduction

Under the Police Reform Act 2002, all police forces have to have an Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) scheme in place. The ICV scheme gives the public reassurance that detainees are being treated fairly by carrying out independent checks to ensure they understand their rights and entitlements and to check that their welfare and dignity are being maintained.

The Essex ICV scheme involves appointed members of the public visiting local police stations unannounced in order to observe and report on the treatment of detainees and the conditions in which they are held. The scheme offers protection to both detainees and the police and reassurance to the community.

ICVs speak to detainees, asking them about their experiences, and checking that they have been given and understand their legal rights and entitlements. ICVs check all areas of custody including cells, kitchen areas, interview rooms, store cupboards, medical rooms, corridors, shower and toilet facilities etc. While there may be an issue with the general environment recorded in one area of custody, the report might also comment on good standards of cleanliness in another area.

ICVs should have immediate access to police custody but accept a short wait for reasons such as a health and safety issue or if ICVs arrive during operational police handover. ICVs should always expect an explanation and can escalate a concern to the Custody/Duty Inspector if they feel it necessary. They complete visit reports, alerting the scheme manager at The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's office of their findings and raising any problems or concerns. The Essex ICV scheme also shares findings, themes and learning with the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) as well with other schemes in the eastern region.

In Essex the issues raised in custody are drawn together and any emerging trends are identified, and channeled through the appropriate police command team and at Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's performance and scrutiny boards.



Custody Suites in Essex

From April 2018 to March 2019, Essex Police had eight operational custody suites.

North LPA

Clacton, Colchester, Chelmsford, Harlow and Stansted

South LPA

Southend and Basildon

West LPA

Grays

For the year 2018 – 2019, the Essex Independent Custody Visiting scheme had fourteen volunteers.

Visits were carried out across the eight custody suites three times per month and at different times of the day and night.

However, due to Stansted being used only occasionally for this custody suite it was agreed there would only be one visit per month.

Station	Cells
Southend Police Station	30 cells
Colchester Police Station	16 cells
Harlow Police Station	14 cells
Basildon Police Station	20 cells
Grays Police Station	17 cells
Clacton Police Station	12 cells
Chelmsford Police Station	15 cells
Stansted Police Custody Suite	2 cells



Terrorism (TACT) suites

There is a designated TACT suite serving each of the following regions: North East, North West, West Midlands, South East and London.

In addition, some PACE custody suites are 'TACT-enabled', meaning that they can be used for TACT detentions prior to a transfer to a dedicated suite.

These suites will also require TACT-trained Appropriate Adult coverage, though this is rarely called upon. Essex has a TACT facility at Southend Custody Suite.

ICV scheme findings 2018 - 2019

Common themes raised by detainees.

In a high proportion of cases detainees indicated they were satisfied with their treatment in custody, were pleased with how staff had dealt with them, had been offered food and drink and had been told their rights and entitlements.

Of those who raised concerns the main areas of concern were:

- Lack of access and delays to medics/medication
- Translators not available to interpret
- Detainees not being given updates by Detention Officers
- Issues with laundry including shortages of blankets
- Not being able to telephone/alert someone they were in detention
- Access to Appropriate Adults was not consistent across the county

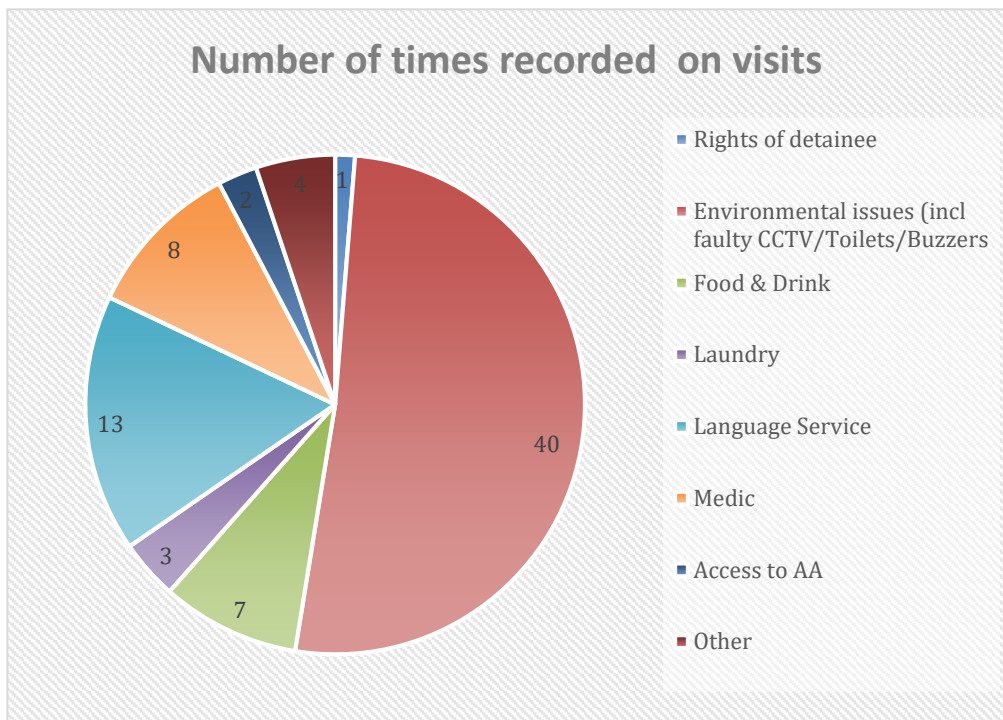


Essex Police is in the planning stage of rationalising the custody estate to best fit the county in the future. Several of the custody suites are considered 'aging' suites and suffer from recurring problems such as obtaining replacement parts for obsolete buzzers and CCTV and wear and tear.

- Faulty cell buzzers
- CCTV not working
- Flaking paint/self-harm risks
- Maintenance issues



Summary of issues raised



Translation Service

In 2017 following a procurement procedure, the translation contract was awarded to a new supplier. While initial feedback was positive, the standard of the service began to slip in August 2018, with custody officers often having difficulty in obtaining a translator for detainees. Dialogue with the service indicated a change in contract had led to some staff members leaving. In some cases the failure to obtain a translator meant detainees were having to be released or bailed as the 24 hour custody window had expired.

Essex Police Custody Command and Senior Officers met with the supplier to discuss how the service regularly failed to meet the expected levels of service which resulted in significant operational impact for victims, witnesses and suspects due to delays in the processing of non-English speaking suspects. A contingency plan was put in place to meet the shortfall in service in custody through direct use of the Association of Court and Police Interpreters (APCI). This was outside of the contracted provision from the supplier. As of December 2018 Detention Officers and ICVs reported that the mitigation put in place was working.

Medical Contract

Following the change of contract from G4S to Castle Rock Group (CRG) in April 2018 there were a number of issues that arose as the new contract bedded in. The main issue was recruitment of medical staff, which took some time to process. This meant medics were not embedded in all suites and long waiting times ensued as officers either had to wait for medics from other suites or transfer the detainees to

hospital A&E. This also impacted the investigative process as officers on occasion faced delays in obtain samples or conducting an interview.

Mitigation included escalation of the issues in corporate vetting and the employment by CRG of a new regional manager who worked closely with the Criminal Justice Command to deliver system improvements and put in place the cross vetting plan with another force.



The Criminal Justice Command were also given direct access to the CRG RADAR system for recording of issues and complaints and for accessing feedback to those issues.

Dignity in Custody

During 2018 – 2019, Essex Police were taking part in an on-going research study run by the University of Sheffield on ‘Good Policing Custody Benchmarking’, which is rigorously examining what ‘good’ policing in custody is. They hope that the research will make help officers and forces improve existing mechanisms for monitoring and reforming police custody, with a particular focus on the dignity of detainees. It will



also benefit the academic community as theories about ‘good’ police custody will be used to explore the implications for ‘good’ or ‘good enough’ policing, an important topic in light of the thirst for security in contemporary societies and an austere economic climate.

After being briefed by Essex Police Custody Command the Independent Custody Visitors refocused their questions on ensuring detainees had been treated reasonably by custody staff and if there had been issues, what could have been done differently to improve the detainee’s experience in custody.

Appropriate Adults

Provision of Appropriate Adults across the county has been reported by ICVs as unequal in places. This can be in part attributed to the areas covered by Essex County Council, and the two separate unitary councils of Southend and Thurrock who each have different services in place. Essex County Council use a service that has an adequate number of volunteers, but struggles administratively. The Commissioning Service of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner’s office is working with Essex Police and services to help drive improvements.

Custody Visits Statistics

STATION	DETAINEES	VISITED	DECLINED	CHILD	136	NOT VISITED either sleeping, interview	Actual able to visit (detainees less not visited)	% Visited
BASILDON	193	97	4	14	1	92	101	96.04
CHELMSFORD	163	80	5	12	0	78	85	94.12
CLACTON	86	37	0	11	3	49	37	100.00
COLCHESTER	169	72	0	14	2	97	72	100.00
GRAYS	181	71	2	17	1	108	73	97.26
HARLOW	145	67	10	8	0	68	77	87.01
SOUTHEND	193	79	0	14	0	114	79	100.00
TOTAL	1130	503	21	90	7	606	524	96.35
TOTAL 2018/2019								

STATION	DETAINEES	VISITED	DECLINED	CHILD	136	NOT VISITED either Sleeping, Interview	Actual able to visit (detainees less not visited)	% Visited
BASILDON	91	60	0	3	0	31	60	100
CHELMSFORD	175	102	3	13	0	70	105	97.14
CLACTON	136	66	4	10	0	66	70	94.29
COLCHESTER	85	39	7	8	1	39	46	84.78
GRAYS	159	83	4	9	2	72	87	95.4
HARLOW	133	62	3	9	2	68	65	95.38
SOUTHEND	272	109	7	29	5	156	116	93.97
TOTAL	1051	521	28	81	10	502	549	94.9
TOTAL 2017/18								

Total number of detainees going through custody 2018/19									
	Clacton	Chelmsford	Colchester	Southend	Basildon	Grays	Harlow	Stansted	TOTAL
TOTAL	2865	3960	2524	4941	1560	3814	3331	232	23227

Looking Ahead



In the coming year ICVs will continue to check that all detainees know their rights and entitlements and that their dignity is being given the appropriate level of attention.

Working in close collaboration with custody command, they will develop their skills in identifying vulnerable detainees and ensure any concerns are raised with detention officer staff.

The scheme will also work with Essex Police to continue to improve the translation service by looking at ways to improve and mitigate long waiting times for detainees. Not knowing their Rights & Entitlements for several hours and having to wait for a translator for their interview has an impact on detainee welfare and we will monitor this for 2019/20.

Continuing to receive regular updates at a strategic level around medic attendance times will enable the scheme to keep working with police to find ways to bring down waiting times, by getting more medics through the vetting process.

Recruitment of ICVs is ongoing but will be challenging due to the constraints around vetting, following a large officer recruitment drive. Any risks to the effective delivery of the scheme will be raised and escalated through the appropriate channels.

Issues with aging estates while the plans for a new custody estate are being considered, means we must continue to be vigilant around potential ligature, self-harm issues and faulty equipment. Police are looking at refurbishment of the oldest suites in the interim.

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