



## Independent Custody Visiting – Information for Applicants

Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) are volunteers from the local community who, as part of a team, make unannounced visits to police custody suites where people have been arrested and are being held. They monitor how people held in custody are being treated and feedback to the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC).

To be an ICV, you must be at least 18 years old, must be living, working, or studying within the police area, and have been resident in the UK for at least 3 years prior to the date of application.

If you would like to join Cambridgeshire & Peterborough's Independent Custody Visiting Scheme, please read this document, and complete an application form which can be found on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough OPCC website.

For more information you can also contact the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough by email: [cambs-pcc@cambs.police.uk](mailto:cambs-pcc@cambs.police.uk) marked "FAO: Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Manager".

### **What?**

ICVs are the eyes and ears of the public in Police custody. ICVs make unannounced visits to police stations to check on the rights, health, wellbeing, and treatment of detainees. ICVs visit in pairs and speak directly to detainees (with their consent) to find out how they have been treated and whether they have been able to access their rights and entitlements. ICVs also speak to custody staff, as well as look at the physical condition of the custody suites.

After each visit, ICVs write a report to the scheme manager, highlighting any positive or negative findings from the visit. The scheme manager reports to the PCC who uses the information the report to identify if action needs to be taken. ICVs enable the PCC to effectively hold the police to account.

Independent Custody Visitors must keep what they see and hear on their visits confidential. To ensure impartiality, ICVs are not told the names of detainees, or why they have been arrested.

### **When?**

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Independent Custody Visitors usually carry out one or two visits a month. Most visits last between 1-2 hours, plus travel time to either Parkside Police Station (Cambridge) or Thorpe Wood Police Station (Peterborough).

Visits are arranged by a rota system, which is usually set 2-3 months in advance, based on the availability of ICVs. Each weekly visit is then planned by the two ICVs scheduled to visit that week, at a time that is convenient to them. I

CVs can arrange to visit Police Custody at any time of day, on any day of the week, but most visits tend to take place between 7am – 10pm.

As well as the visits, there are team meetings, usually held on a Monday evening four times a year, at Police Headquarters in Huntingdon (dates are set in December for the following year). ICVs are asked to attend a minimum of 3 meetings and can attend in person or via virtually.

ICVs are also asked to attend one training day a year, and there are opportunity for attending regional and national conferences.

### **Where?**

There are two full time operational custody suites that ICVs visit, one at Parkside in Cambridge, and one at Thorpe Wood in Peterborough. There are also resilience suites in Huntingdon and March.

There are currently two custody visiting teams. The north group visit custody suites in Peterborough, March, and Huntingdon. The south group visit the custody suite in Cambridge. ICVs can visit suites in both areas, but most of the time will be asked to visit the suite most convenient for them.

### **Could this be you?**

Whatever skills you already have you will be able to put them to use in a completely new environment. A genuine concern for the welfare of others is essential. You'll need to keep things confidential and have the time to carry out visits, attend panel meetings and a training session.

Being impartial, responsible, and patient is also important, as is the ability to work as part of a team and communicate effectively.

### **What can you expect from us?**

An opportunity to make a real difference to the welfare of vulnerable people in custody. We will also provide an opportunity for training and development on a personal level.

Once you have applied, if you are eligible to be and ICV, you will be invited to an informal interview with the scheme manager and existing volunteers to ensure the role is right for you.

If you pass the interview, you will be offered the position as an ICV, subject to passing vetting checks.

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Currently ICVs are asked to submit and complete the Non-Police Personnel Vetting – Level 2, in line with Cambridgeshire Constabulary’s vetting policy. While you are not working for the Constabulary, you will have access to information and people in their care, who they have a duty to protect.

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner provides a one-day training course for new volunteers as well as ongoing “bitesize” training. ICVs need to know and understand the responsibilities of the police and the rights of the people in custody.

When the scheme manager has placed you in a team, we will put you with an experienced Custody Visitor who will go on visits with you and guide you through your first few visits.

All ICVs have a six-month trial period and once confirmed in post, your role will be on a three-year tenure in line with vetting renewals.

### **What next?**

If you want to become an ICV, the next step is to fill out an application form.

The PCC is committed to equal opportunities in managing the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme and welcomes applications from eligible candidates irrespective of their religious belief, political opinion, gender, disability, age, race, marital status, sexuality or whether they have dependants or not.

As young people and people from minority ethnic communities are currently under-represented in our custody visiting teams, we particularly welcome applications from these groups. However, all candidates will be selected on merit.

Visitors must be independent persons who are able to make informed and justified judgements and unbiased observations in which the community can have confidence and which the police will accept as fair criticism.

Where an applicant has one or more convictions for criminal offences, or has received any formal caution, warning, or reprimand, or has failed to disclose any such finding, the specific circumstances must be considered in assessing suitability to become an ICV. However, past offending is not an automatic barrier to acceptance.

In appointing ICVs, care must be taken to avoid any potential conflict of interest. For example, serving police officers and other serving members of police or PCC staff will be unsuitable for that reason. The same will apply to special constables, justices of the peace, members of police and crime panels or PCCs. All applications will be considered on their merit.

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