

PFCC Decision Report

Report reference number: 149-23

Classification: Not protectively marked

Title of report: Review of the PFCC's Volunteer Policies

Area of county / stakeholders affected: Essex Restorative and Mediation Service, Independent Custody Visitors and Animal Welfare Scheme Volunteer Visitors

Report by:

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Chief Officer:

Janet Perry - Chief Financial Officer & Strategic Head of Performance and Resources

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Date of report: 26 September 2023

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek the Commissioner's approval of:

- a. The PFCC Volunteer Policy, version 4.3
- b. The Essex Independent Custody Visiting Policy, version 5.0

2. Recommendations

2.1 The recommendation is that the Commissioner approves:

- a. The PFCC Volunteer Policy, version 4.3 (Appendix A)
- b. The Essex Independent Custody Visiting Policy, version 5.0 (Appendix B)

3. Background to the proposal

3.1. The PFCC Volunteer Policy was first produced in 2019 to create a transparent and consistent approach to how the PFCC works with, manages, and supports volunteers. It ensures that volunteers understand what is expected of them and

what they can expect from the PFCC in return. It was reviewed in 2021 and has been reviewed again in 2023 in accordance with the PFCC's Policy Review Plan.

- 3.2. The Independent Custody Visiting Policy first came into effect in November 2012 to provide guidance for those volunteering on behalf of the PFCC in the role of Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs). It provides a clear and consistent framework for the ICV Scheme and sets out its operating process, including how feedback is provided to Essex Police in relation to the findings from ICV visits. It was last reviewed in 2021 and has been reviewed again in 2023 in accordance with the PFCC's Policy Review Plan.
- 3.3. Reviewing the two policies alongside one another has allowed aspects relating to all PFCC volunteers to be incorporated within the Volunteer Policy, and various previously separate documents relating to the ICV Scheme to be brought together within one Independent Custody Visiting Policy. Content of the previous Independent Custody Visiting Policy that described detailed visiting procedures has been moved out of the Policy and included instead within the detailed ICV Handbook that is issued to all ICVs as part of their indication training. This has also been reviewed alongside the two policies.

4. Proposal and associated benefits

- 4.1 The 2023 review of the policies and handbook has ensured that policies and operational procedures are consistent across the PFCC's three volunteering schemes (the Essex Restorative and Mediation Service, the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme and the Animal Welfare Scheme). The Volunteer Policy now covers all matters pertaining to all volunteers working on behalf of the PFCC, whilst the Independent Custody Visiting Policy sets out the overarching guiding principles of the ICV Scheme, and the Handbook describes the day-to-day work required from an ICV. Previously, there were a myriad of policies relating to the various volunteer schemes, some of which were inconsistent with each other, and it was often difficult to know where to find the information required. The consolidation of the policies into this small library will bring clarity and avoid confusion going forward.
- 4.4 The updated policies will be published on the PFCC's website, supporting the Commissioner's commitment to volunteers and the transparency of the provision for the public.

5. Options analysis

- 5.1 The PFCC could decide to reject the amendments and retain the current policies. This would mean the policies would be out of date and, on occasion, inconsistent. This would not be best practise therefore that option is not recommended.
- 5.2 The PFCC relies on volunteers to deliver services to a high standard. Without a review of the policies, they will not be fit for purpose and will not reflect current thinking or best practice, which might make it difficult to recruit, retain and support volunteers. There are also risks that we will not be following good practice which could leave the PFCC open to reputational risk.

6. Consultation and engagement

- 6.1 Scheme Managers and Coordinators worked with PFCC volunteers to produce some of the information that was contained in the initial versions of the PFCC Volunteer Policy and the Essex Independent Custody Visiting Policy.
- 6.2 The PFCC and Chief Constable were consulted on the target number of Independent Custody Visits included within the Independent Custody Visiting Policy during their formal Performance Meeting on 17 April 2023.

7. Strategic links

- 7.1 The ICV Scheme is a statutory responsibility of the PFCC. It also supports effective governance of Essex Police by providing independent checks on detainees and allows public transparency of that process.
- 7.2 All three volunteer schemes (the Essex Restorative and Mediation Service, Independent Custody Visiting Scheme and Animal Welfare Scheme) form part of Police and Crime Plan 2021-2024 in which the Commissioner commits to encourage volunteers and community support by 'investing in those who volunteer for the roles embedded in the PFCC's office including RJ volunteers, ICVs and Animal Welfare Dog Visitors to ensure they feel skilled, valued and appreciated'. The Police and Crime Plan 2021-2024 also describes the PFCC's commitment to support our officers and staff "so that staff, volunteers, and officers are recognised for the contribution they make to preventing crime and keeping our county safe." The PFCC Volunteer Policy and the Essex Independent Custody Visiting Policy set out how these commitments will be delivered in practice.

8. Police operational implications

- 8.1 There are no direct operational policing implications arising from this decision report, although the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme does provide a check on operational matters within the custody suites under the direction and control of the Chief Constable.

9. Financial implications

- 9.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the approval of these documents, which will be delivered within existing resources.

10. Legal implications

- 10.1 The PFCC has a statutory responsibility to deliver an Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) scheme. This is a volunteer-led service which is supported by these policies.
- 10.2 The Essex Independent Custody Visiting Policy has been reviewed to ensure its compliance with the Home Office Code of Practice on Independent Custody Visiting (March 2013), the Independent Custody Visiting National Standards

2013 and the Independent Custody Visiting Association's (ICVA's) Quality Assurance Framework.

11. Staffing implications

- 11.1 This policy applies to volunteers who work on behalf of the PFCC in delivering the Essex Restorative and Mediation Service, Independent Custody Visiting Scheme or Animal Welfare programmes. Both policies note that volunteers have no employment status except under health and safety legislation.

12. Equality and Diversity implications

- 12.1 The Equality Act 2010 obliges the PFCC to:

- Take steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people, and
- Encourage people with protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

- 12.2 The PFCC is mindful of reflecting our diverse community within our volunteer pool and committed to ensuring this by monitoring and recording self-reported diversity information of volunteers and acting to increase the diversity of our volunteers in line with the local profile.

13. Risks and mitigations

- 13.1 There is a reputational risk associated with not approving an updated version of the PFCC Volunteer Policy and / or the Essex Independent Custody Visiting Policy, which is set out in section 5 above.

14. Governance Boards

- 14.1 The updated PFCC Volunteer Policy and Essex Independent Custody Visiting Policy have been discussed and approved in principle at the PFCC's Senior Management Team (SMT) meeting on 28 September 2023.

15. Links to Future Plans

- 15.1 Approval of the updated policies will strengthen the evidence that is available for submission as part of the ICV Scheme's application to retain its silver accreditation under the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) Quality Assurance Framework (QAF). The PFCC is required to apply for re-accreditation by 30 September 2023.

16. List of Background Papers and Appendices

Appendix A. The PFCC Volunteer Policy (version 4.3)

Appendix B. The Essex Independent Custody Visiting Policy (version 5.0)

Report Approval

The report will be signed off by the PFCC Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer prior to review and sign off by the PFCC / DPFCC.

Chief Executive / M.O

Sign:



Print: P. Brent-Isherwood

Date: 26 September 2023

Chief Finance Officer

Sign:



Print: Janet Perry

Date: 29 September 2023

Publication

Is the report for publication?

YES

NO

If 'NO', please give reasons for non-publication (Where relevant, cite the security classification of the document(s). State 'None' if applicable)

None

If the report is not for publication, the Chief Executive will decide if and how the public can be informed of the decision.

Redaction

If the report is for publication, is redaction required:

1. Of Decision Sheet?

YES

NO

2. Of Appendix?

YES

NO

If 'YES', please provide details of required redaction:

N/A

Date redaction carried out:

Treasurer / Chief Executive Sign Off – for Redactions only

If redaction is required, the Treasurer or Chief Executive is to sign off that redaction has been completed.

Sign:

Print:

Chief Executive/Treasurer

Date signed:

Decision and Final Sign Off

I agree the recommendations to this report:



Sign:

Print: Jane Gardner

Deputy PFCC

Date signed: **29 September 2023**

I do not agree the recommendations to this report because:

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Sign:

Print:

PFCC/Deputy PFCC

Date signed: