The Independent Custody Visiting Scheme for Essex

2022/23 Annual Report





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Foreword by Roger Hirst – Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex

I am pleased to present the Annual Report on the Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) Scheme for Essex. This report details the important work carried out through this scheme during 2022/23. The ICV Scheme enables the scrutiny of Essex Police custody to ensure the welfare and human rights of detainees are always upheld.

During 2022/23 we appointed a designated ICV Manager to support our ICV volunteers in their role.

Satisfaction with the service continues to be positive, with more Essex Police officers and staff reporting ICV as a positive tool to provide reassurance to the Essex community that their police force works to the highest standards.

But we could not deliver this service and get these results without the hard work and dedication of our volunteers. Last year we committed to upskilling visitors to ensure they are



adequately trained and supported in their role, and now we have a training package for each new visitor to equip them with the tools and skills required to complete custody visits diligently and successfully.

During the year, our volunteers logged over 500 hours of service and are on track to give even more hours next year, as four new ICVs have joined the scheme.

Looking ahead, the ICV scheme will continue to work hard to bring about positive outcomes for detainees, custody and the Essex community, and will play its part in helping to shape the format of Independent Custody Visiting on a national scale. Continuing to recruit more volunteers, to allow us to drive up the number of ICV visits, will continue to be a priority, as will working to increase the representation of volunteers for the scheme, both to ensure equal access for all community members to be a part of the scheme and to ensure that it is representative of those it serves. There is also still much work to be done with partners on the regional and national level, and we are looking forward to hosting the ICV Regional Conference in October 2023.

By continuously striving to develop and adapt the Essex Independent Custody Visiting Scheme, its volunteers are making a real difference in the county. I'm incredibly proud of the team and the difference it is making and look forward to seeing even greater strides made in the coming months.

Roger Hirst

Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex

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Foreword by Mike Calvert – T/Chief Inspector Head of Custody, Essex Police

In an era where trust and confidence in policing is paramount, independent and transparent assessments are not just encouraged—they are essential. This is where our dedicated Independent Custody Visitors step in, playing an indispensable role in preserving public trust and confidence.

ICVs undertake surprise visits to our police custody suites, delving into every corner, ensuring we're delivering the standards of service that our community expects and deserves. Their meticulous reports spotlight issues ranging from maintenance and infrastructure concerns to the more complex matters like juvenile and female detention and welfare.

Over the past 12 months we have faced numerous challenges, including preparation for the forthcoming HMICFRS inspection, in which the ICVs play a pivotal role in helping to shape and hone our practices. With the invaluable feedback from ICVs, we have made huge strides and our ongoing collaboration continues to lead on innovative changes.

Within our custody command, our efforts have been ceaseless. We've focused on refining our practices to better manage demand across our custody estate, ensuring both detainees and our dedicated staff are safeguarded. As we venture towards 2024, I believe the integration of Athena upgrades, improvements to lighting and CCTV, and the introduction of our comprehensive performance framework, shared with ICV leadership and the PFCC, will further amplify our commitment to transparency and excellence.



I have had the privilege of meeting several ICVs during custody visits and have witnessed first-hand the fervour and tenacity with which they approach their roles. Additionally, the ongoing dialogue and relationship the ICV coordinator have been instrumental in driving improvements, and I'm optimistic about the continued positive evolution of our working relationship for the better and safer use of police custody for all.

In closing, to all our ICVs: Your voluntary commitment to ensuring integrity in our custody suites is beyond commendable. Your contributions are vital to our growth, and for that, I extend my deepest gratitude.

T/Chief Inspector Mike Calvert

Essex Police Custody Command Team

Mike Calvert

Introduction to 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 Inspection. 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 table below show a total number of cells available in each custody suite.

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

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

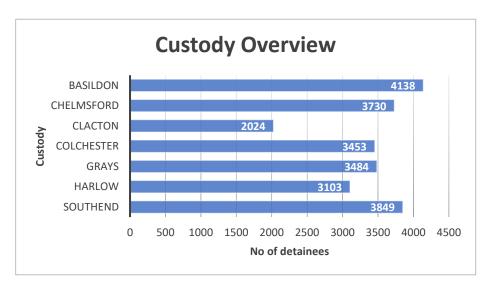
There were no significant long-term closures of custody suites over the year. Custody suites occasionally closed for no more than 24 hours for a standard deep clean of the suite.

The Chelmsford and Southend custody suites have recently been refurbished and are considered the newest suites in the county. Over the course of 2023/24, there are plans for each custody suite in Essex to be fully refurbished and a new CCTV system installed.

Detainees in Essex Police Custody in 2022/23

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

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



Basildon custody proved to be the busiest suite with 4,138 detainees booked in between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023 and Clacton being the least busy with 2,024 detainees booked in.

Introduction to the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme for Essex

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 the 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 <u>Home Office</u> <u>Code of Practice on Independent Custody Visiting</u> 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 2013.

The scheme is supported by and compliant with more detailed national standards that expand the relevant procedures and set out established good practice. The <u>national standards</u> 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.

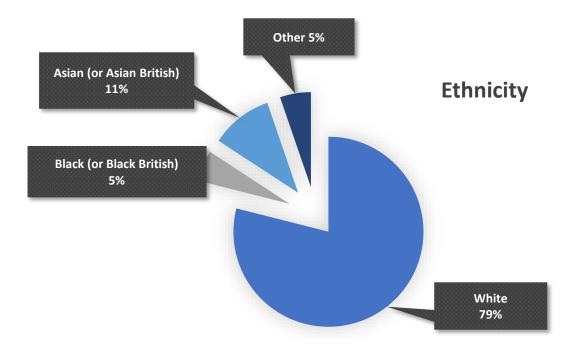
Visits must be undertaken in pairs for health and safety reasons and generally last no more than an hour. It is important that ICVs are able to compare different custody suites and the standards within them, so they visit more than one suite in their relevant geographical cluster and at varying times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

Essex ICVs Profile

Following the appointment of a dedicated ICV Manager in September 2022, recruitment of ICVs has been identified as a priority. In 2021/22, Essex ICV had 15 active ICVs covering the county. A recruitment campaign run in October 2022 attracted more candidates, resulting in four new ICVs being appointed. This increased the total number of active ICVs in Essex to 19. Unfortunately, however, towards the end of 2022/23, three ICVs left the role due to personal circumstances and commitments. This reduced the total number of active ICVs in Essex to 16 at the end of the financial year.

Essex ICVs Demographic Profile – Ethnicity

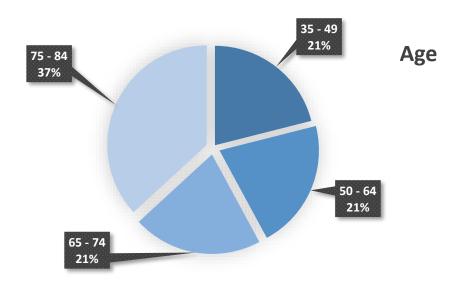
In line with the composition of the county, the ethnicity of ICVs is predominantly White British, but recruitment in 2022 successfully attracted more diverse members to the scheme. The graph below shows the current ethnic representation of the Essex ICV volunteers.



At the time of 2021 census, 11.2% of the Essex population was from ethnic minorities. ICV ethnic representation reflects the composition of the county with 79% being White British and 21% coming from ethnic minorities.

Essex ICVs Demographic Profile – Age

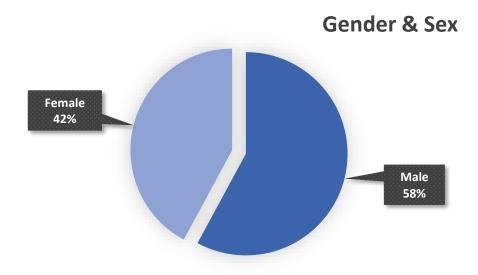
In terms of age representation, most of the group falls within the age range of 65-84 years old although the recent recruitment campaign attracted more candidates from younger age groups. The graph below shows the age representation for the Essex ICV scheme.



At the time of 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 59 years old. We will seek to attract more candidates from younger age groups through future recruitment campaigns.

Essex ICVs Demographic Profile – Gender & Sex

In terms of gender representation, 11 volunteers are male and eight are female. The graph below provides a breakdown of the gender representation in the Essex ICV Scheme.



At the time of 2021 census, the Essex population was 51.3% female and 48.7% male. Females are therefore currently slightly under-represented in our current cadre of volunteers. Again, we will seek to address this in future recruitment campaigns.

Recruitment & Training

Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, we received 16 email enquiries about the role of the ICV. Out of those, six applications were received, and interviews took place. Two applicants withdrew from the application process due to loss of interest in the role. Four applicants were successfully recruited onto the scheme.

A new ICV induction training package has been developed to ensure all new ICVs are sufficiently equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to complete ICV visits successfully. Attendees are asked 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. Each attendee is required to pass the assessment at the end of the training.

ICVs are kept updated of current issues across the UK and trends in custody via regular newsletters from the ICV Manager which include any information passed on by the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA).

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

- Assertiveness
- Data Collection
- Appropriate Adults Role and Purpose
- Free AIM qualifications

- Use of Force
- Physical Disabilities in Custody

Volunteer Appreciation

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

In December, volunteers met together for a Christmas lunch which was an opportunity for the group to socialise and strengthen the relationship between each visitor.

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

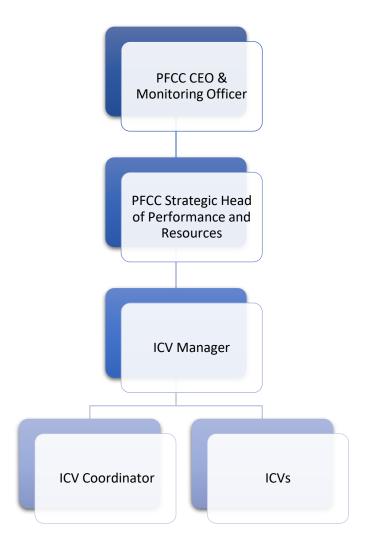
Additionally, we organise for a small token of appreciation to be given out to each volunteer during national Volunteer Week in each year.

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 scheme undertaken by the ICV Scheme Manager. The ICV Scheme Manager reports to the Strategic Head of Performance and Resources, who also has oversight of the ICV Scheme in Essex.

The ICV Manager is responsible for monitoring the performance, budget, and webpages to ensure the effective organisation and running of the scheme. They are 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. The organisation chart below represents management of the Essex ICV scheme.



After each visit, ICVs complete a report which provides a current picture of the custody suite, and any issues that the custody visitor 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 rapidly drawn to the attention of those in a position to respond accordingly. 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, 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 have been established since January 2023 with the Custody Chief Inspector, Estates lead manager and Criminal Justice Command Officer to monitor trending areas of concern and to strengthen the relationship between the Essex ICV Scheme 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 / 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 are actioned.

Custody visiting data

In total, 181 visits were completed last year. This is an increase in comparison with the year before, when 175 visits were made. The Essex ICV Scheme made, on average, 16 visits per month to Essex Police's custody suites during 2022/23, compared to an average of 15 visits per month the previous year. Southend's custody suite received the most visits, at 30 during the year. Chelmsford and Harlow received the fewest, at 22. A full breakdown of the number of the visits made can be seen in Table 2, where is can be seen that performance improved during the last quarter of the year.

Suite	Apr 22	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22	Oct 22	Nov 22	Dec 22	Jan 23	Feb 23	Mar 23	Total	LAST YEAR
Basildon	3	2	1	2	1	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	28	27
Grays	2	2	3	2	1	1	3	3	2	2	2	3	26	27
Chelmsford	2	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	3	3	3	2	22	13
Clacton	2	3	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	3	25	27
Colchester	4	4	2	1	2	2	1	3	2	3	2	2	28	28
Harlow	2	1	1	0	2	1	3	2	2	2	3	3	22	25
Southend	3	3	1	2	1	2	3	3	2	3	3	4	30	28
Total no visits	18	16	11	10	10	11	17	17	15	18	18	20	181	175

Table 2. Number of ICV visits completed between April 2022 and March 2023.

Each custody suite should be visited three times a month, at various times of the day and on various days of the week. In order to achieve this, each Independent Custody Visitor commits to making three visits per month. Unfortunately, however, not all of our ICVs were able to meet those requirements in the last year. Several ICVs left the scheme post-pandemic to shield and some who remained in the scheme understandably took a while to regain the confidence to complete the required frequency of visits. Other ICVs left the role for other reasons and long waiting times for vetting all contributed to a having a smaller pool of ICVs available to complete the visits.

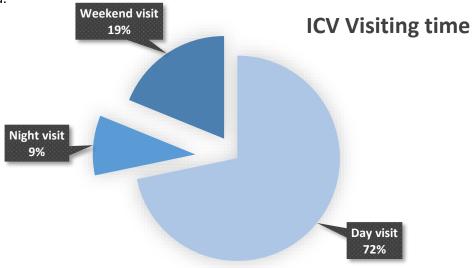
In September 2022, a designated ICV Manager was appointed to – amongst other duties - ensure a sufficient number of ICVs are appointed and to provide more meaningful insight into the scrutiny over detainees' wellbeing. Since the appointment of the ICV Manager, the average number of ICV visit went from 13 visits a month (April 2022 – September 2022) to 18 visits a month (October 2022 –

March 2023), with 20 achieved in March, which evidences the increase in visits completed. Further development plans to ensure the required number of visits is completed are discussed later in this report.

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 time of day.

The time visited is recorded as either 'during day', 'night visit' or 'weekend'. The chart below provides a breakdown of the 181 visits completed in relation to the time when the visit was completed.



Visits profile

During the 181 visits completed, ICVs have seen 968 detainees in total and directly spoke to 408 of them. 31 detainees declined an offer to speak to an ICV, which is a lower number of detainees refusing to engage with ICVs that in the previous year, when 39 detainees refused an ICV visit. The reasons for a lower number of detainees refusing an ICV visit might include the work completed around promoting the scheme externally and the subsequent increase in the awareness of the scheme. The continued work of the ICVs in being able to introduce themselves and build a rapport with detainees is a key aspect when it comes to creating a comprehensive dialogue and understanding how detainees feel about their time whilst held in custody.

287 detainees were sleeping at the time of ICV visit. Generally, ICVs will not request for the detainee to be woken up for the purpose of the ICV visit (unless there is a significant concern). Although ICVs were not able to speak to 287 detainees who were asleep, observations were made through the hatch and those visits were also recorded.

The rest were unavailable for a visit for various reasons such as being hospitalised, in interview, or having a meeting with their solicitor. Table 3 shows a full overview of the visits completed.

Details	Number
Spoken to	408
Asleep (but observed)	287
Declined	31
Not seen (operational reasons) / cell observed	214
Not seen (detainee away) / cell observed	28
Total	968

Table 3. Detainee's visits profile recorded by ICVs between April 2022 and March 2023.

'Not seen (operational reasons)' includes those detainees who were either at an interview or meeting their solicitor / Appropriate Adult 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.

TACT detainees

We have special group of ICVs who are qualified to visit TACT (Terrorism Act Custody) facilities and speak to suspected terrorist detainees. Unlike mainstream custody visits, TACT visits tend to be prearranged as there are relatively few such detainees and ad hoc visitors are unlikely to find them. In a scenario of a TACT detainee being booked in, Essex Police contacts the ICV Scheme Manager as soon as practicable and ICVs arrange to visit. Unlike standard custody, suspects can remain in detention for up to 14 days. 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 within this report.

Essex ICV scheme findings

Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023 our ICVs raised in total 139 issues relating to issues such as maintenance, food provision, the estate, or IT areas of custody. Examples of issues raised include foul-smelling drainage, flaky paintwork, low food stock, faulty buzzers / intercoms and CCTV not properly working. These issues were collated into themes which are presented in the table below along with the subsequent action taken.

Matters raised by ICVs and the subsequent action taken					
Theme	Matter identified	Action taken			
Detainees requesting updates	A small number of reports submitted mentioned lack of immediate updates when requested by the detainee (around custody process, timeliness, progression).	This was discussed with the Custody Manager who committed to ensuring all detainees are updated on regular basis and within the lines of PACE. Immediate update (within 15 mins			

		of the request) might not always be possible due to staff capacity and their subsequent workload but each detainee is being updated within one hour after the request has been made. All ICVs took part in refresher training to remind them that they are allowed to access the Custody Record (after receiving the detainee's consent) to ensure the issues raised by the detainees have been addressed by the Custody staff and are recorded in the Custody Record.
Food provision	A small number of reports mentioned limited or low supplies in the custody suites.	This has been discussed with the relevant Custody Manager who explained that low stock supply was due to a mixture of new contracts being secured and the ongoing effects of EU exit. Since then, new procedures have been put in place for custody suites to share stock if needed to ensure a normal level of food provision is always available at each suite.
Maintenance	Due to aging custody suites, ICVs noted a variety of maintenance issues including faulty buzzers, CCTV, lights and toilets, as well as leaking taps and flaking paint.	Chelmsford Custody Suite has been thoroughly upgraded in 2022. Following consultation, it has been agreed that each custody will undergo a major refurbishment with a significant CCTV upgrade. The plan allows for each custody suite to be closed one at a time whilst work is in progress. It is expected that each custody will be closed for around three months to allow full refurbishment to take place. All works are expected to be completed in 2025.
Reporting	A number of ICV reports were lost after the ICV visit took place, either due to human error or documents being misplaced in the custody suite.	This was discussed and escalated to the Criminal Justice Strategic Development Board as a matter of urgency. A new action plan includes ICV reporting to move from manual reporting to online reports. This process is expected to be completed by the end of

	2023 with new online reporting to
	be launched from April 2024.

Detainees' 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 & 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 2022/23.

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 new medical staff 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. They also recorded instances where police officers attended the home address to obtain medication.

Other areas of note / special events

ICVA membership & accreditation

The ICVA is funded by the Home Office and Police and Crime Commissioners. ICVA supports ICV schemes across the country to deliver effective oversight of police custody to ensure a safe environment and to deliver public reassurance. ICVA's suite of training materials equips ICVs with in-depth knowledge of the latest best practices required to fulfil their role, from interpersonal communication skills to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE). ICVA represents also ICVs in the National Preventative Mechanism (NPM), alongside Independent Custody Visitors Scotland and the Northern Ireland Policing Board Independent Custody Visiting Scheme.

The Essex ICV Scheme is a member of ICVA and has achieved Silver Accreditation on their Quality Assurance Framework. ICVA's training materials are used to help build and maintain the knowledge and skills of local Independent Custody Visitors, 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 / or highlights areas of local concern. The ICV Manager contacts 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, NPCC and other national organisations to articulate problems

and resolve issues. During the period 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023 there were no substantial concerns raised.

Communications & engagement

The Essex ICV scheme has been active in the media this year. Our volunteer appeal on the Next Door platform reached over 22,056 people in Essex. We have also placed advertisements on the PFCC's social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

We have also designed three posters and one information leaflet explaining the role of ICVs for wider reach when recruiting new volunteers.

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. In October 2022, we contacted universities in Essex to share the opportunity of the role of ICVs with students studying law, psychology and criminology. We were also present at a recruitment fair in March 2023 at the Anglian Ruskin University in Chelmsford, where we spoke to over 200 students about the opportunity that the ICV role brings.

ICV Regional Conference

In 2023 Essex is planning to host the annual regional conference, in which all regional ICV schemes are invited to participate. Over recent years, hosting a conference was not possible due to Covid-19 related risks so we are excited to be hosting the 2023 event, and planning is well underway for this.

Future plans

Over the next year, the Essex ICV Scheme plans to further develop the scheme, particularly by actively recruiting more volunteers, raising awareness of the scheme and establishing regular opportunities to discuss visit findings with a wider professional group within the police force.

Our main objectives for the year 2023/24 are:











Promote the service across the county by actively participating in internal and external events.

Recruit and train at least five new ICVs.

Meet the agreed target of completed visits to custody suites per

Establish and actively participate in Custody Scrutiny Panels, chaired by the PFCC.

Arrange and host the 2023 ICV Regional Conference

Further information and contact details

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

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Web: http://www.essex.pfcc.police.uk

✓ Twitter: @EssexPFCC

Useful websites:

- ICVA (Independent Custody Visiting Association)
- National Preventative Mechanism
- Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation