

PFCC Decision Report

Report reference number: 012-24

Classification: Not protectively marked

Title of report: Reporting Change in Essex Independent Custody Visiting

Area of county / stakeholders affected: Countywide

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Chief Officer: Janet Perry (Chief Financial Officer and Strategic Head of Performance and Resources)

Date of report: 2 July 2024

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report outlines the rationale for the Essex Independent Custody Visiting Scheme (Essex ICV Scheme) replacing its current format of reporting (manual) with a new format (online). In order to transition to online reporting, Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) must have the means to complete the reports on an appropriate device.
- 1.2 Since the appointment of the ICV Scheme Manager in September 2022 (22 months ago), nine reports have been misplaced. Additional control measures were put in place to reduce the risk of further reports being lost whilst other solutions were explored. The Head of Custody and wider Custody Command are aware of reports having been lost and are supportive of the proposed system reporting change as a means of preventing this going forward.
- 1.3 The proposal in this report includes the one-off purchase of eight tablets at a cost of up to [REDACTED]

- 1.4 In addition, there is a requirement to purchase Microsoft Power BI licenses in order to be able to present the data collected. This will cost up to [REDACTED] per annum.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the PFCC agrees that the Essex ICV scheme should move to online reporting.
- 2.2 That the PFCC approves the allocation of up to [REDACTED] to fund the purchase of eight tablets, using the PFCC's carried forward underspend held in the General Reserve.
- 2.3 That the PFCC approves the allocation of up to [REDACTED] per annum to fund two Microsoft Power BI licenses. This will be charged to the PFCC's non-pay budget, following an adjustment from the favourable variance on the PFCC recharges.

3. Background to the Proposal

- 3.1 The Essex Independent Custody Visiting Scheme has been using a manual reporting system since it was first established in March 2003. Since the appointment of the ICV Manager in September 2022 (22 months ago), it has been identified that nine reports have been misplaced. Additionally, manual reporting has proved to be not only a time-consuming task but also a difficult format from which to analyse data obtained from the reports. During further investigation and discussions held (via the Criminal Justice Strategic Development Board, ICV Eastern Region group meeting, Essex ICV team meetings, and the PFCC's Performance and Resources team meeting), an online reporting system was identified as an alternative option and found to have benefits to the overall effectiveness and accuracy of ICV reporting.
- 3.2 Both the Essex Police Information Security and Essex Police Data Protection Compliance teams have reviewed and approved the proposal (via the Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) Stage 1) to change the reporting format. This proposal has also received approval from IT via the Idea Validation process.

4. Proposal and Associated Benefits

- 4.1 It is proposed that the new ICV online reporting system replaces the current manual reporting system by no later than 1 November 2024.
- 4.2 It is proposed that the PFCC will allocate up to [REDACTED] for the purpose of procuring eight tablets to be used by Independent Custody Visitors whilst carrying out their role in custody suites. As this is a cost that will only be incurred by the PFCC once, it is proposed that the 2023/24 underspend is used to fund it. The IT Business Relationship department has confirmed that the tablets will remain under the monitoring of Essex Police Mobile Comms who will discuss options with us in five years' time when the tablets might be

due for replacement. Options would include extending the life of tablets for further five years or re-selling and purchasing new tablets, whereupon new funding might be needed.

- 4.3 It is proposed that the PFCC will allocate up to [REDACTED] per annum for two Microsoft Power BI licenses, allowing modern, effective, and efficient data analysis from the ICV reports.
- 4.4 It is expected that moving from manual reporting to online reporting will bring several benefits for the PFCC and the ICV scheme, including improved legibility and completeness of reports received, improvements to the quality of the report analysis, increased accuracy of the reports and eliminating the risk of reports being lost. Moreover, this change will also eliminate risks of personal and sensitive data being inappropriately accessed from printed reports.
- 4.5 The online reporting system will allow consistency in reporting by ensuring each report includes all the matters ICVs are required to cover when speaking to detainees. Additionally, the new online system has been designed to be more intuitive, enabling visitors to plan follow-up questions, depending on the detainee's condition. For example, the system will prompt ICVs to ask additional questions of a detainee for whom English is not a first language or enquire about additional support for a detainee under the age of 18.
- 4.6 It is expected that this move to online reporting will save time and resources. Each ICV visit report is currently completed on at least 10 pages. With 21 visits per month, this equates to a total of 210 printed pages per month that are being discarded once the information has been retrieved by the ICV Manager.
- 4.7 It is expected that moving from manual to online reporting will also bring efficiency benefits for Essex Police. With each visit taking approximately 2.5 hours of ICV time and 2.5 hours of detention staff / officer time we are expecting the overall reduction in time spent in custody by ICVs to be an average of one hour per visit which results in total of 21 hours per month of time saved. This may potentially allow an increased number of visits to be completed or provide additional resilience to complete the current number when resources are reduced.

5. Options Analysis

- 5.1 The PFCC could choose not to approve the change in ICV reporting and remain with the current format of manual reporting. However, this would forego the opportunity to improve the coverage and analysis of reports as described above and would mean that the risk of reports being mislaid would continue.

6. Consultation and Engagement

- 6.1 This decision is taken following discussion with the Criminal Justice Strategic Development Board, Eastern Region ICV Group, Independent Custody Visiting Association and Essex ICV volunteers. Advice was also sought from and provided by the Data Protection Compliance and Information Security leads. A full DPIA Stage 1 assessment has been completed, submitted, and approved by the Essex Police Data Protection Compliance team. A full System Operating Procedure (SOP) has also been completed, submitted and approved by the Essex Police Information Security team. An EIA has also been completed and shared with the PFCC's Senior Management Team as part of the governance process.

7. Strategic Links

- 7.1 The Police and Crime Plan 2021-2024 commits to "Invest in those who volunteer for the roles embedded in the PFCC's office, including ICV volunteers, to ensure they feel skilled, valued and appreciated". The online reporting system allows volunteers access to the technology they need to perform their roles to a high standard. Volunteer visitors were also consulted on and are supportive of this proposal.

8. Police operational implications

- 8.1 An efficient ICV online reporting system will mean that all completed reports can be processed and managed with greater accuracy and efficiency. This should lead to a reduction in workload for custody staff and custody officers as online reporting can reduce the time that the ICVs spend in custody, where they have to be accompanied by custody staff or a custody officer at all times.
- 8.2 An efficient and effective ICV service can also improve the public perception of, and confidence in, the police and PFCC.

9. Financial implications

- 9.1 There are no financial implications associated with this proposal other than those already described in this report (a one-off sum of [REDACTED] for the purchase of tablets and two annual license fees totalling £150 per annum for the Power BI Dashboard). The one-off cost of [REDACTED] will be funded through the carried forward PFCC underspend in the General Reserve. Following this allocation, the PFCC will have allocated [REDACTED] in 2024/25 from their carried forward underspend in the General Reserve, leaving a balance of [REDACTED]
- 9.2 Procured tablets will remain under the technical care of Essex Police Mobile Comms who will discuss options in five years' time when the tablets might be due for replacement. Options would include extending the life of tablets for a further five years or re-selling and purchasing new tablets. Therefore, after five years, additional one-off funding will be required.

10. Legal implications

- 10.1 The PFCC has a statutory responsibility to deliver an Independent Custody Visiting scheme. This is a volunteer-led service which is supported by the Police and Crime Plan 2021-2024.
- 10.2 The transition from manual to online reporting 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 The online reporting system provides an effective and efficient process for staff and volunteers to log, monitor and share ICV information. The proposed transition to online reporting applies to volunteers who work on behalf of the PFCC in delivering the Essex Independent Custody Visiting Scheme as well as the staff who access and analyse the reports.

12. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion implications

- 12.1 All Essex Police detainees are entitled to an ICV visit to ensure their rights are upheld whilst they are in police custody. The Essex ICV Scheme seeks to make itself as accessible as possible, encouraging members of the public to take part in ensuring Essex Police is working to the highest standard.
- 12.2 The ICV online reporting system will be securely accessible from any custody location in Essex with internet access and therefore enables ICV volunteers to access the software on the tablets for their ease of use, supporting those struggling with the current long, hand-written reporting process.
- 12.3 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and can be seen in Appendix 16.1. There are two potential impacts based on analysis of data and information relating to age and disability. The new online reporting system has considered these implications, and it is expected that the use of an electronic form would support those with disabilities (such as dyslexia or dyscalculia) affecting their handwriting skills. By consulting our volunteers at every stage of the system development and by providing training, any potential disadvantage can be mitigated.

13. Risks and Mitigations

- 13.1 There is a significant risk that maintaining a manual reporting system could lead to further ICV reports being lost and ICVs volunteers being left frustrated and not feeling valued.
- 13.2 The risk associated with going ahead with the proposal mainly relates to potential technical issues whilst operating the electronic method such as tablets not being fully charged upon ICVs' arrival in the custody suite,

forgetting passwords, or internet outage. However, these risks have been identified, discussed, and mitigated as part of DPIA Stage 1 and PFCC DPIA.

14. Governance Boards

- 14.1 This proposal to move to online reporting has been discussed at the Criminal Justice Strategic Development Board and has received its support.
- 14.2 This proposal has also been part of the PFCC internal governance process and discussed with the Senior Management Team at its meeting on 2 July 2024.

15. Links to Future Plans

- 15.1 This proposal supports the ICV scheme in contributing to plans and strategies including the Police and Crime Plan and its own ICV Strategy. It also allows the Essex ICV scheme to remain in line with changing national practice guidelines around custody visiting.

16. Background Papers and Appendices

- 16.1 Equality Impact Assessment - [20240604 ICV Online reporting EIA V1.0.docx](#)

Report Approval

The report will be signed off by the PFCC's 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: 4 July 2024



Chief Finance Officer

Sign:

Print: Janet Perry

Date: 10 July 2024

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*)

Subject to redaction, as set out below

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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2. Of Appendix?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>
	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>		NO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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

Financial details highlighted in yellow to be redacted

Date redaction carried out:19/07/2024.....

Chief Finance Officer / Chief Executive Sign Off – for Redactions only

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

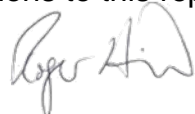
Sign: 

Print: Darren Horsman - Deputy MO

Chief Executive / Chief Finance Officer

Decision and Final Sign Off

I agree the recommendations to this report:

Sign: 

Print: Roger Hirst

PFCC

Date signed: 17/07/2024

I do not agree the recommendations to this report because:

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Sign:

Print:

