



2021/2022 Quarter 3 Statistics

1 October 2021 to 31 December 2021



STAFFORDSHIRE COMMISSIONER
Police | Fire and Rescue | Crime

INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING

2021 / 2022 Quarter 3 Statistics

1st October 2021 – 31st December 2021

Purpose

To provide statistical data on Independent Custody Visits made to the Custody Suites in Staffordshire during the period 1st October 2021 and 31st December 2021.

Background

It is the responsibility of the Staffordshire Commissioners Office (SCO), in accordance with section 51 of the Police Reform Act 2002, to operate an Independent Custody Visiting Scheme. The scheme provides an independent check on the way the Force carry out their duties with regard to detained persons.

Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) are volunteers appointed from the local community. Their role is to observe, comment and report on the conditions under which persons are detained in Police custody. Their visits provide an independent check on the way Police Officers carry out their duties in relation to the statutory and other rules governing the welfare of Detained Persons (DPs).

In Staffordshire there are two ICV Panels. The Northern Area Panel has 13 members and is responsible for visits to the Northern Area Custody Facility (NACF) at Etruria. The Southern Area Panel also comprises 8 members and visits the Watling House Custody Facility at Gailey.

ICVs are required to conduct their visits in pairs and following each visit they complete an ICV1 Form. The ICV1 form records the arrival, start and end time for each visit, the category of DPs present and whether they are male, female or a Young Person. It records the number of DPs present, the number accepting a visit and the reasons why a visit was not accepted or able to be conducted. The form also has space for the ICVs and Custody Sergeants to make and respond to comments and also for the ICVs to record matters raised by the DPs they visit.

These arrangements allow the SCO to secure greater understanding and confidence in the operation, in practice, of the custody environment and the treatment of detained persons.

The SCO produce quarterly statistical data and annual statistical data from the information provided by Independent Custody Visitors on their ICV1 report forms. The production of statistical data in a report format will ensure a formal independent oversight of custody proceedings.

COVID-19 Pandemic

The SCO closely monitored the pandemic through 2020 and 2021. In response to the rising threat posed by the pandemic the SCO in consultation with Staffordshire Police took the local decision to temporarily suspend face to face visits from 13th March 2020.

This suspension of activity allowed appropriate guidance to be sought and risk assessment completed specific to the working environment and the individuals responsible for tasks, safeguarding the ICVs, those working within the custody environment and the detainees. Working closely with the Independent Custody Visitors Association and Staffordshire Police, there was a combined effort to ensure independent scrutiny of the facilities in Staffordshire was maintained.

The following section serves to explain those methods utilised during that time in Staffordshire. Please note that these were not traditional ICV monitoring methodologies but were suggested by the Independent Custody Visitors Association as reasonable alternatives to implement.

COVID-19 Staffordshire's ICV Scheme Response

Actions taken by Staffordshire Police and SCO in response to the pandemic were shared with the ICVs at regular intervals throughout 2020-2021. National guidance and best practice was also shared with the ICVs to ensure they were consulted regarding implementing the following monitoring methodologies.

Custody Inspector Conference Calls

These calls commenced on the 15th April 2020 with routine reporting from the Inspectors required. This reporting has a set of questions taken from those identified by the Independent Custody Visitors Association in the Keep Monitoring Moving release as at 24th March 2020, covering the custody environment, PPE and cleaning regimes, the impact of Covid-19 on the facility, staffing issues and availability of Appropriate Adults, Duty Solicitors and Healthcare Professionals. These calls ceased in May 2021 as some Covid restrictions were lifted.

Custody Sgt Virtual Visits

The virtual visits commenced on 13th May 2020 after the implementation of ICT equipment and software to support the virtual visit process. The virtual visits aimed to emulate the usual ICV face to face visits and were facilitated by a Custody Sergeant. The ICVs had a standard checklist to work through and check detention records as they would do in a usual visit. There was also opportunity to ask additional questions surrounding the environment and information regarding knock on effects being felt in the custody facility from other Criminal Justice System partners. These virtual visits ceased in September 2021 as restrictions were lifted.

Detainee Statistical Analysis

Weekly reports were received from the SCO Performance Team regarding the length of stay of detainees in custody facilities in Staffordshire. This information was, and still continues to be regularly monitored and although some isolated cases of increased detention time have been seen where onward transport is required to partner facilities, this is now no longer an issue.

Mid-Week Monitor

The Independent Custody Visitors Association sent out each week, during 2020 and 2021, a survey on the custody environment and the impact of Covid. These surveys were completed and returned each week and contained questions relating to hygiene, safeguarding, Appropriate Adults, Solicitors, social distancing arrangements and child detainees. These surveys have now reduced to a monthly basis.

COVID-19 Staffordshire's ICV Scheme Position as at 31st December 2021

Face to face visits in the usual format recommenced fully in September 2021.

Detainee Statistics

Between 1st October 2021 and 31st December 2021 3054 people were detained by Staffordshire Police. Of those detainees 137 (4.5%) were present when Independent Custody Visitors conducted their visits.

Visiting Panel		Northern Area	Southern Area	Total Across all Panels
Breakdown of Detained Persons	Adult	22	88	110
	Juveniles	0	0	0
Total Number of Detained Persons Present		22	88	110

- Adults (100%) make up the majority of detainees across all panels and 0% were juveniles. Proportionally, of all detainees for Staffordshire Police for the 12 month period 2020/2021, adults represented 94.5% and juveniles 5.5%.
- During the visits a total of 68 detainees were visited.
- During these visits 42 detainees were not physically visited, or their custody records analysed for the reasons as detailed below:

Reasons why visits were not made to Detained Persons	Northern Area	Southern Area	Total For Reason Specified
Visit refused by Detainee	3	0	3
Being interviewed	6	1	7
Asleep	7	2	9
Advised not to visit	12	1	13
Not selected/observed	7	3	10
Other reason (record analysis undertaken due to Covid19)	0	0	0
Total of Detainees not visited, as % against Detainees present during visit	26%	5%	31%

Visit Statistics

Day of the Week:

The following table summarises the number of days on which ICV visits took place and the total visits in the period undertaken by that panel :-

Day of the week that Visits were undertaken	Northern Area	Southern Area	Total All Panels
Monday	2	1	3
Tuesday	4	1	5
Wednesday	3	1	4
Thursday	3	5	8
Friday	6	1	7
Saturday	1	0	1
Sunday	1	0	1
Total number of visits conducted	20	9	29

- Please note that the total number of visits conducted is how many ICV visits were undertaken, it does not represent the number of detainees that were present for each visit undertaken by the ICVs.

Visit Times:

The following table summarises the times of day on which visits took place:-

Visit Start Times(24hour)	Northern Area	Southern Area	Total All Panels
06:00 -12:00	9	8	17
12:01 - 18:00	11	1	12
18:01- 00:00	0	0	0
00:01 – 05:59	0	0	0
Total number of visits conducted	20	9	29

Waiting Times:

ICVs should note their arrival time on the ICV1 Form as the time they present themselves at reception and declare their intention to perform a custody visit. ICVs should be admitted immediately to the custody area. The visit start time should be recorded at the moment they have been admitted to the custody area. If access is delayed for more than five minutes the credibility of the visit could be questioned. Access to the general custody suite from the reception area should only be delayed when the Custody Officer considers that the ICV may be placed in immediate danger if they are allowed to enter. Once inside the custody suite ICVs are aware that they may have to wait for staff to become available to escort them on their cell visits but are able to utilise any time they may have by observing the formal booking in process and checking any ancillary rooms.

The following table summarises the length of time that ICVs had to wait to be admitted to custody:

Waiting Times	Northern Area	Southern Area	Total All Panels
Entry within 5 minutes	20	8	28
Entry after 5 but before 10 minutes	0	1	1
Entry after 10 but before 15 minutes	0	0	0
Entry after 15 minutes	0	0	0
Total for Individual Panels	20	9	29

Length of Visit:

The following table summarises the length of each custody visit/ call

Visit Length	Northern Area	Southern Area	Total Across All Panels
0 - 30 Mins	0	2	2
31 - 60 Mins	5	4	9
61 - 90 Mins	7	3	10
91 - 120 Mins	4	0	4
Over 2 Hours	4	0	4
Total for Individual Panels	20	9	29

- Average visit length across all panels for the period is 77 minutes.
- Actual time spent by Staffordshire's ICVs inspecting Custody Suites in this period amounts to 37 hours and 13 minutes.

Summary

- There has now been a full return to face to face visits.
- The SCO wishes to thank the Custody Teams in Staffordshire Police and the Independent Custody Visitors for their willingness to adapt to new ways of working and their commitment to ensuring that the welfare of detainees has been maintained in unprecedented circumstances.

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