

Independent Custody Visiting Scheme for Merseyside

Recruitment Pack



2018

 **POLICE COMMISSIONER**
Working For Merseyside

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 What is an Independent Custody Visitor?

Police and Crime Commissioners are responsible for maintaining and administering an Independent Custody Visiting scheme in their area. Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) are members of the local community who volunteer to check on the welfare of people detained in police custody. They call at police stations in pairs, unannounced and write short reports about their visit. The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) for Merseyside is then informed of any issues that arise during an ICV visit to consider if appropriate action is required. Recommendations made by ICVs can require the police to make improvements for the welfare of detainees. They play a valuable role in maintaining public confidence in this important area of policing.

1.2 What is their role?

Their main role is to look, listen and report what they observe during the visit. Most detainees welcome the opportunity to speak with an ICV however, some may not. ICVs are required to maintain independence and impartiality at all times.

ICVs do not take sides with the police or the detainee. On arrival at the police stations, ICVs will be escorted to the custody area. Interviews with detainees are normally carried out within sight, but out of hearing of the custody officer or custody assistant.

1.3 When and where are visits made?

ICVs always make visits to custody suites in pairs, randomly and unannounced. Visits can be undertaken 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. Volunteers are required to undertake a minimum of 1 visit per month, unless otherwise agreed by the OPCC. ICVs will be required to visit all custody suites throughout the duration of their appointment.

2 ELIGIBILITY

There are no qualifications needed but applicants must;

- Be over 18 years of age.
- Live or work in Merseyside.
- Have good communication skills.
- Have the time and flexibility to carry out the role of custody visiting.
- Be independent from the police, impartial and work in a non-discriminatory way.
- Be able to maintain confidentiality.
- ICVs cannot be serving Magistrates, police officers, police community support officers (PCSO), special constables, police staff or OPCC staff.

All applications will be considered however, care will be taken to avoid any potential conflict of interest. Applicants who have previously served as Magistrates, police officers, PCSOs, special constables, police or OPCC staff and are no longer in this role must allow a three year time lapse from their employment prior to applying for the role of ICV. This is to preserve the independency of the scheme.

Applicants will be subject to a criminal records check. However, it should be noted that having a criminal record or unspent convictions is not an automatic barrier to becoming a custody visitor. Individual circumstances will be assessed against the needs of the post and suitability of the applicant. All appropriate applications from members of the public are considered on their own merits.

Successful applicants will receive initial and on-going training and support. Out of pocket expenses and a casual car users allowance are available.

Appointment of an ICV is initially for a three year period and will be confirmed following the satisfactory completion of a six-month probationary period. ICVs will then have the opportunity to be re-appointed every three years following a full re-assessment of suitability for the role. ICVs will be required to complete a medical health questionnaire and vetting procedure prior to the renewal of existing contracts. Re-appointment will be based on the continuing ability and willingness to perform the role effectively. ICV's are restricted to a nine year maximum tenure to protect the independence of the scheme.

3 ROLE DESCRIPTION / MAIN DUTIES

The roles and responsibilities of an ICV are:

1. To attend police custody suites to check on the welfare, conditions and treatment of detainees in custody.
2. To arrange visits with fellow ICVs, in line with agreed rotas.
3. To undertake some weekend and late night visits to designated custody suites.
4. To accurately record all visits on the ICV visit report form, ensuring all relevant information is recorded, and to circulate copies as directed.
5. To adhere to the 'Memorandum of Understanding' and the 'Scheme Handbook' issued by the OPCC on commencement of the role.
6. To follow all appropriate procedures when dealing with issues relating to detainees.
7. To check on the conditions in which detainees are kept including their legal rights and entitlements, with reference to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) Code C.
8. Where appropriate, check detainees custody records to clarify any concerns that they raise.
9. To maintain professional working relationships with police staff, and to bring to the attention of custody staff any issues that need to be dealt with.
10. To complete and submit expense claims in line with scheme guidelines.
11. To attend all quarterly meetings and other training and information sessions as required by the OPCC.
12. To carry out all reasonable instructions given by the Chair of the Independent Custody Visiting scheme.

There may be other duties not mentioned in this list, that ICVs may be required to complete from time to time.

4 PERSON SPECIFICATION

<u>Essential Criteria:</u>	<u>Measured by:</u>
Must be at least 18 years of age	Application
Must live or work in the Merseyside area	Application
Resident in the UK for at least three years prior to date of application	Application
Have sufficient time, flexibility and commitment to carry out the role of custody visiting, training and meetings	Interview
Be able to work with colleagues as part of a team	Interview
Be able to undertake visits safely and abide by the health and safety procedures as set by Merseyside Police and the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner	Application and interview
To be able to communicate effectively with people from a diverse range of backgrounds in line, using translation support were necessary	Application and Interview
Demonstrate independence and impartiality	Interview
Good communication skills both oral and written	Application and Interview
Good observational and listening skills	Interview
To be able to maintain confidentiality	Interview

<u>Desirable Criteria:</u>	<u>Measured by:</u>
Have some knowledge of the criminal justice system, police procedures and the role of independent custody visiting	Interview
To be able to complete forms clearly and concisely	Application and interview

5 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the role of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the OPCC in the scheme?

Independent Custody Visiting is a statutory requirement of Police and Crime Commissioners of which the purpose is to provide independent oversight of the detention of people in police custody. The aim of this is to provide the public with confidence that the police treat people lawfully and with respect.

The scheme is administered by the staff within the OPCC. The office is a point of contact for the ICVs.

What is it like carrying out a visit?

No two custody visits are the same. All ICVs undergo training to prepare them for the role. There may be risks when entering a custody suite but both ICVs and the custody staff are trained to recognise these risks and respond accordingly. You do not make physical contact with any detainees, instead you will be positioned in the door way of the cell, whilst the detainee is usually sat down.

How much of my time would I need to put into the scheme?

ICVs are required to carry out one custody visit per month. However, visits are can be undertaken 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. At times this will include conducting a visit on weekends and during unsociable hours. ICVs will be given a rota with the week commencing date in which a visit is required. ICVs will then arrange with their visiting partner the exact date and time the visit will be conducted to suit their availability. There is no time limit for a custody visit, they can take either 30 minutes or three hours depending on the number of detainees in custody or if any issues are found during the visit.

ICVs are also required to attend training sessions and quarterly meetings throughout their time as a volunteer. Upon appointment, ICVs are required to complete an induction training programme following which refresher training sessions will be held for all volunteers.

What experience is required?

When recruiting, the OPCC strive to appoint individuals who demonstrate good communication and listening skills as well as the ability to work with people from a wide range of backgrounds. Please refer to the person specification on page six of this guide for more information.

What is the dress code for visits?

ICVs are advised to wear suitable attire that will not cause any health and safety risks to themselves or others in the custody suite. Certain items of clothing or accessories such as neck ties, scarves, necklaces, short skirts or shorts the OPCC advise ICVs to refrain from wearing. Formal wear such as suits should not be worn as this may give the impression that the visitor is an 'official' or 'authority figure' rather than an independent individual.

6 HOW CAN I APPLY?

To apply to be an ICV, please complete the application form available on the website and forward to the OPCC via email or post at the contact details below.

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Merseyside
Allerton Police Station
Rose Lane
Liverpool
L18 6JE

Tel: 0151 777 5155

Email: OPCC.ICV@merseyside.pnn.police.uk

Website: <http://www.merseysidepcc.info/home/get-involved/independent-custody-visitors.aspx>

Please do not hesitate to get in contact with the OPCC if you any have any other queries.