



Annual Report January 2026

City of London

Independent Custody Visiting Scheme

Foreword, by the ICV Cohort of the City ICV Panel

The period from April 2024 to March 2025 has been one of heightened scrutiny for policing nationally. Public confidence and perceptions of procedural justice have been shaped by high profile documentary investigations into detainee treatment and the broader workings of the UK Policing and criminal justice system, alongside His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) PEEL 2023-2025 inspections of forces nationwide. These developments have reinforced the importance of transparency, ethical standards, and safeguarding within custody environments.

Custody remains a vital component of the criminal justice system, and the City of London Independent Visitors Scheme (ICV) Scheme has continued to act as a critical friend to the City of London Police, providing robust oversight to ensure detainees' rights, welfare and entitlements are consistently upheld. Through regular visits to Bishopsgate Custody Suite, the Scheme has broadened its understanding of the needs of detainees, including those with visible and non-visible disabilities, and how these needs evolve during detention.

Despite operational pressures, such as large-scale protests and events linked to international conflicts, which have occasionally drawn custody staff into frontline duties, the professionalism and sensitivity demonstrated by the City of London Custody Team has been commendable. Their commitment to safeguarding life and maintaining high standards has resulted in constructive detainee interactions and notably zero deaths in custody during this reporting period.

Significant investment in training and development for Custody Sergeants and Dedicated Detention Officers has strengthened resilience, with the Scheme contributing to learning initiatives led by the Force's Learning and Development Department. While promotions and secondments have created valuable opportunities for officers and staff to advance their careers, they have also introduced staffing challenges. Robust succession planning therefore remains essential to maintain high standards and deliver a safe and effective custody provision.

Mental health-related detentions remain challenging, often intensified by intoxication, acute crises and sporadic violence toward custody staff. The force's proactive approach, through initiatives such as mental health triage, neurodiversity screening and partnerships with organisations including Samaritans, Alcoholics Anonymous, and Veterans Aid, reflects a positive cultural shift towards safeguarding vulnerable individuals and addressing systemic risks highlighted by national reviews.

Looking ahead, the new state of the art custody facility at Salisbury Square opening in 2027, presents a major opportunity to strengthen detainee welfare and set new standards for modern policing. HMICFRS's 2018 inspection highlighted areas for improvement in custody provision, including the need for modern facilities that meet the highest standards of safety, dignity and operational efficiency. While significant progress has been made since that time, the forthcoming custody estate offers the chance to embed these principles into the very fabric of the building and its processes.

From an ICV perspective, this investment is more than bricks and mortar, it is a commitment to creating an environment that supports humane treatment, procedural fairness and accessibility for all detainees, including those with complex needs. Purpose built design will allow for improved observation and monitoring, enhanced privacy and better integration of health and wellbeing services. Dedicated space for mental health triage, neurodiversity screening, and confidential consultations will strengthen early intervention and safeguarding, reducing risks identified in national thematic reviews.

The new facility also provides scope for innovation in technology design, such as digital custody records, improved CCTV coverage and ergonomic layouts that support both detainee welfare and staff wellbeing. These advancements will help ensure compliance with legislative requirements and HMICFRS standards, while reinforcing public confidence in the integrity of custody operations.

Coupled with improvements in bail management, such as the introduction of a dedicated Bail Manager, the new custody estate will enable more consistent decision-making, reduce reliance on Released Under Investigation, and support timely progression of cases. This will not only improve detainee experience but also deliver wider benefits across the criminal justice system.

As a Panel, we welcome this forward-looking approach and remain committed to working in close partnership with the City of London Police as they embark on this significant development. The new custody facility at Salisbury Square is not simply a structural upgrade, it is an opportunity to set a benchmark for best practice nationally, ensuring that custody provision reflects the highest standards of safety, dignity and operational compliance.

Our collaboration will focus on maintaining alignment with HMICFRS recommendations, supporting the City of London Police with their preparedness for future inspections and embedding lessons learned from previous reviews into the design and operation of this modern environment.

The Panel's role will continue to be pivotal in provision independent oversight, safeguarding the principles of dignity, fairness and procedural justice for all detainees. We will also continue our engagement with the Independent Custody Visitors Association (ICVA) to ensure that national themes and emerging best practices are consistently addressed at a local level.

Together, we aim to ensure that this new custody estate is not only fit for purpose today but designed to meet the evolving needs of policing and the communities we represent for years to come.

We extend our sincere thanks to the City of London Police Custody Manager, the Custody Team, the Police Authority Board ICV Scheme Sponsor Member, and the Scheme Manager for their continued dedication to custody provision and the work of this group.

City of London Independent Custody Visitors Scheme

Foreword, by Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Sponsor, Police Authority Board Member Deborah Oliver

This report, covering April 2024 to March 2025, provides assurance on progress made in custody provision and highlights areas for improvement.

Over the past year, policing and custody services nationally have been shaped by thematic priorities from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC), the Independent Custody Visitors Association (ICVA), and the College of Policing.

Against this backdrop, the City of London Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) Scheme has continued to provide robust oversight, supporting the Police Authority in meeting its statutory responsibilities and safeguarding detainee welfare. I'm encouraged by the strong culture of care and accountability demonstrated by custody team.

Feedback from City ICVs both through written reports and verbal observations, consistently highlights the professionalism and dedication of the City of London Police custody team. Their commitment to maintaining high standards, treating detainees with dignity and ensuring compliance with legislation is evident throughout this reporting period. This provides reassurance that custody operations remain aligned with national expectations and best practice.

The reduction in detainee numbers, particularly among children and young

people reflects national priorities to divert juveniles away from custody. Low use of strip searching and force, alongside strong quality assurance processes, demonstrates a clear commitment to dignity and compliance with legislation. Embedded healthcare provision and referral pathways for vulnerable detainees, including mental health and substance misuse support are commendable and align with national safeguarding standards. The Force's proactive approach to cultural integrity, reinforced through training and CPD, further strengthens confidence in the professionalism of our custody cadre.

However, there are areas requiring continued focus. The outstanding HMICFRS recommendation on equality data and disproportionality remains a priority. Accurate and timely recording of EDI data must be embedded to enable effective scrutiny. The introduction of the City of London Police's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, published in July 2024 presents a significant opportunity to address disproportionality and improve transparency in detention figures going forward.

Operational resilience continues to be an important priority. Staffing pressures have highlighted the need for effective workforce planning, and ensuring timely attendance by Appropriate Adults remains essential to safeguarding vulnerable detainees.

The forthcoming development of a modern custody facility at Salisbury Saure represents a significant step forward in strengthening custody provision and

embedding best practice for the future. This investment, alongside deeper partnerships and sustained external scrutiny through mechanisms such as the City ICV Scheme, will help ensure custody services remain professional, transparent and aligned with national standards.

The City ICV Scheme remains committed to supporting the City of London Police as they build on these improvements, ensuring custody provision remains professional, transparent and trusted by the public.

INTRODUCTION

THE CITY OF LONDON INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING SCHEME (ICV SCHEME)

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the City of London ICV Scheme in the period of 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 including:

- the Panel's performance.
- areas of good practice or issues and concerns the visits have raised; and
- objectives of the ICV Scheme for 2025/26.

The City of London Corporation, as the Police Authority for the City, is a separate body to that of the City of London Police. It has a statutory duty to ensure the delivery of the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme. Oversight of the ICV Scheme is provided by the Police Authority Board.

Independent custody visiting is governed by a range of legislation and guidance including the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984 and Home Office Codes of Practice and National Standards (2013).

ICVs are members of the local and business community who volunteer to visit police

stations on an unannounced basis to check on the treatment of detainees and the conditions in which they are held. To be eligible to become an ICV, individuals must:

- be over 18.
- be independent from the police force and policy authority; and
- have no direct involvement in the criminal justice system.

The City of London ICV Panel currently consists of 8 volunteers who visit the custody suite situated at Bishopsgate Police Station on an unannounced basis once a week.

The City of London ICV Panel collaborates closely with the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) to highlight issues in custody detention, such as delays in the attendance of Appropriate Adults and legal representation for detainees.

A member of the Police Authority Board attends the quarterly Panel meetings along with a representative of the City of London Police to ensure that any questions or concerns that have surfaced from visits to custody can be adequately addressed. The quarterly Panel meetings are supported by the Police Authority ICV Scheme Manager.

THE ROLE OF INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITORS

To ensure the safety and wellbeing of volunteers, it is mandatory for visits to custody to be undertaken in pairs. Visits to custody are made on an unannounced basis so ICVs can look, listen, and report on conditions in custody at the time of their visit.

The primary objective of all visitors is to observe and report on the treatment and conditions of individual detainees and to check that their rights and entitlements are being observed.

ICVs are always accompanied by a custody officer throughout their visit to custody. Each detainee is provided with an opportunity to

engage and speak directly to custody visitors. Circumstances may arise where detainees should not be disturbed, particularly when they are asleep during a rest period, or when specific health or safety risks have been identified which prevent an interview from taking place. Detainees may only be interviewed with their consent and may choose not to provide permission.

Visit interviews with detainees are undertaken in clear sight, but out of earshot of the escorting officer so details of what visitors see and hear remain confidential. Strict rules of confidentiality apply so detainees are identified by their custody numbers only. ICVs are independent and impartial. They do not provide advice or involve themselves in the process of investigation. In this respect, they are not concerned with any alleged offence and cannot perform tasks on behalf of the detained person.

ICVs complete a report to record details of the visit. The information included in this report focuses on actions for City of London Police and the ICV Scheme Manager and can include:

- details of any good practice ICVs have observed during their visit;
- reference to any immediate problems encountered and resolved at the time of visiting; or
- details of any matters requiring further action.

Copies of the reports are provided to the Superintendent (if appropriate), the Custody Manager and the ICV Scheme Manager. The information provided within each report is discussed by the ICV Panel at the next review meeting. If necessary, more serious issues can be highlighted directly to the Police Authority Board or dealt with outside Panel meetings.

PANEL MEETINGS

Quarterly Panel meetings provide ICVs with an opportunity to discuss each visit and raise any

issues that have arisen across the previous quarter.

Short update and information sessions are also incorporated into each agenda to ensure ICVs are kept up to date and well informed of national developments regarding the custody environment.

Topics discussed this year included:

1. Recruitment of New ICVs

Membership of the City ICV Scheme has increased from 5 to 8 volunteers, achieving an equal balance of four male and four female volunteers.

Outcome: This improvement delivers on a previous commitment to expand the membership of the City's voluntary cohort and strengthen the resilience and capacity of the Scheme. Membership has increased from five to eight volunteers, achieving an equal balance of four male and four female volunteers and improving the ethnic diversity of the Panel.

These changes enhance the breadth of perspectives within the Scheme, ensuring that custody visiting reflects a wider range of experiences and helps to maintain the quality and frequency of unannounced visits to custody.

2. Use of Force

Scrutiny and oversight of custody operations remain a key focus covered in HMICFS inspection reports and external scrutiny mechanisms have continued to strengthen, ensuring transparency and accountability in detainee management.

The proportion of custody records indicated that detainee experienced use of force during their detention in City custody cannot be reliably compared year on year due to recording anomalies

identified within the Niche system. During the reporting period, these anomalies required manual review and cleansing to ensure the accuracy of the 2025 dataset; however this process was not applied to 2024 records. Although the uncleansed 2024 data suggests a use of force rate of approximately 17%, this figure should not be interpreted as a direct comparison.

Incidents involving the use of force that have raised concern, or where further explanation of the circumstances was required, have been escalated directly to the Scheme Manager. These matters have been addressed in collaboration with Custody Management and incorporated into individual officers' continuous professional development processes, ensuring that learning and improvement are embedded.

Custody Management have also provided detailed explanations of the rationale for the use of force, the circumstances surround each incident highlighted, and the outcomes for individual officers during panel meetings. This approach reinforces transparency and supports informed scrutiny by external stakeholders.

3. Appropriate Adult Attendance

The presence of an Appropriate Adult during procedures involving juveniles and vulnerable adults in police custody is a statutory safeguard established under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE). Appropriate Adults play a critical role in protected the rights and welfare of these individuals, ensuring they are treated fairly and can fully participate in the detention process.

Their responsibilities include facilitating communication and accompanying

detainees during key stages of the detention process, such as interviews, sample collection, and bail charging. National Standards require attendance within 90 minutes of request, and performance data for this reporting period demonstrates a compliance rate of 85% for arrivals within this timeframe.

Outcomes: The Scheme Manager has worked closely with the Custody Manager to ensure that all detainees requiring support receive it under an annual contact arrangement. Monitoring meetings between the Custody Manager and the Commissioning Team have continued throughout the reporting period to review performance and address any concerns promptly.

To mitigate delays in attendance, the City of London Police has maintained an on-the-spot purchase arrangement with the Appropriate Adult Network, providing additional resilience and ensuring timely support for vulnerable detainees. This provision was accessed on 35 occasions during the reporting period.

4. Professional Development, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Opportunities

Professional development has remained a cornerstone of custody operations throughout the reporting period. ICVs have consistently been briefed on the delivery of CPD sessions and the introduction of new training modules designed to address identified gaps and emerging priorities. Key areas of focus included:

- Mental health awareness and suicide prevention, supported by external partnerships such as the

Samaritans Listening Service and James's Place.

- Equality and diversity training: including care for transgender detainee and gender sensitive practices.
- Legal compliance and operational governance, covering Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) updates, Bail and Released Under Investigations (RUI) procedures and risk assessment standards.
- Practical skills development, such as searching protocols, pre-release risk assessments and detainee safeguarding.

Training needs analyses informed the structure of the 2025 CPD programme, ensuring that content remains relevant and responsive to operational challenges. The introduction of a "Train the Trainer" initiative will further strengthen the mentoring and coaching capabilities within the custody cadre.

Outcome: These initiatives have enhanced staff competence and confidence, ensuring custody officers are equipped to deliver safe, lawful, and dignified detention in line with NPCC strategic principles of professionalism and betterment.

5. Recognition and Professionalism

Recognition of custody as a specialist area has been a recurring theme throughout this reporting period with:

- Awards and commendations for staff and volunteers, including Force Awards and external recognition for partnership work.
- Initiatives to raise the profile of custody roles and acknowledge the

professionalism and resilience of the custody cadre.

Outcomes: Reinforcing professionalism and recognising achievement has strengthened the identity of custody as a critical component of policing and the criminal justice system.

6. Safeguarding Vulnerable Detainees

Safeguarding has been a recurring priority, with custody management reporting on measures to identify and support detainees with complex needs. Key developments across this reporting period have included:

- Continuation of ADHD Screening pilots and broader neurodiversity awareness initiatives.
- Expansion of mental health first aid training, with positive feedback received from HMICFRS and external stakeholders.
- Suicide prevention strategies, including listening skills training and awareness campaigns delivered in partnership with the Samaritans.

These measures have been complemented by improved signposting to specialist services and the integration of bespoke referral pathways for detainees presenting with mental health or substance misuse vulnerabilities.

Outcome: Enhanced early identification and intervention for vulnerable individuals has reduced risk and improved welfare outcomes, reinforcing the City of London Police's commitment to safeguarding.

7. External Partnerships and Community Engagement

- Samaritans, providing in house custody listening services and staff training.
- Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, offering post-release support for individuals with additions issues.
- Veterans Aid, delivering rapid intervention for ex-service personnel facing homelessness or crisis.
- Jamess Place, providing suicide prevention and therapeutic support for men in acute distress.

These partnerships have been recognised nationally as examples of good practice with the City of London Police model influencing similar initiatives in other forces.

Outcome: Multi-agency collaboration has expanded signposting opportunities, ensuring detainees receive holistic support beyond custody and contributing to improved wellbeing.

8. Development of new custody facility at Salisbury Square

The City of London ICV Scheme has continued to play an active role in shaping the design and functionality of the new custody facility at Salisbury Square. Building on earlier consultation stages, ICVs provided feedback on key aspects of detainee welfare, privacy and accessibility, ensuring that the proposed design reflects national standards and best practice. Specific contributions included:

- Recommendations on exercise yard visibility
- Interview room layout
- Integration of technology to support transparency and monitoring.
- Emphasis on the importance of creating a safe and inclusive environment for vulnerable detainees, including children, women and individuals with neurodiverse needs.

These inputs have been shared with the design team for consideration and integration across evolving project design plans, with further engagement planned in 2026.

Outcome: This collaborative approach demonstrated a commitment to embedding independent scrutiny into the planning of the new facility, reinforcing public confidence and aligning with NPCC aspirations for a modern, professional custody environment.

9. Priorities for 2025/26

- Collaborate with the City of London Police to ensure that feedback provided by Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) on the Salisbury Square custody design programme is fully considered within the consultation process and reflected in the delivery of a code-complaint custody suite.
- Enhance the resilience of the City Scheme through further recruitment and onboarding of new volunteers.
- Maintain and deliver a fully code complaint Independent Custody Visiting Scheme in accordance with

the Independent Custody Visiting
Association (ICVA) Quality
Assessment Framework.

Conclusion

The developments highlighted across the reporting period demonstrate a sustained commitment to delivering a custody service that is safe, professional, and aligned with national standards.

Operational resilience has been tested during periods where custody has operated with minimal staffing levels as a result of competing operational priorities.

Despite these challenges, the custody cadre has maintained service delivery and safeguarded detainee welfare through continuous investment in staff training and inclusive practices.

In parallel, the development of strategic partnerships has improved transparency and accountability across custody operations, while formal recognition of staff contributions has fostered a culture of professionalism and excellence.

Collectively, these initiatives support public confidence in the integrity of custody operations and reflect the City of London Police's determination to uphold the highest standards of care and procedural justice.

Visit Statistics

	Total Number of detainees in Custody at the time of visit	No of detainees offered visit	No. of detainees accepted visit
Bishopsgate Q1	26	16	14
Bishopsgate Q2	17	6	3
Bishopsgate Q3	19	11	11
Bishopsgate Q4	6	5	5
Total	68	38	33

ISSUES AND CONCERNS ARISING FROM VISITS

The lists of issues and concerns reflects the range of issues that have been raised by detainees in the last year and other issues which have been reported by ICV Panels elsewhere for which there has been a nil return for the City of London.

	Bishopsgate
No of Total Visits	
Report Form with no matter requiring a police response	8
Infrastructure/furnishing/fittings/out of service	20
Comments individual officers – positive	9
Comments individual officers – negative	2
Cleaning, tidiness and general hygiene – positive	5
Cleaning, tidiness and general hygiene – negative	2
Information Technology	13
Temperature	6
Health related matters	20
Procedures not followed	0
Rights and entitlements seemingly delayed	0
Personal hygiene requests – (showers, washing etc)	0
Requests for phone calls	14
Perceived risk for detainees	0
Periodic checks (15, 30 minutes) not maintained	0
Requests for food and drink	3
Requests for literature/documents	5

Station	Target No of Visits	Achieved	% of Target
Bishopsgate	52	27	52

DAYS OF VISITS

	No of Visits	% (figure expressed to two decimal place)
Monday	2	7.40
Tuesday	6	22.22
Wednesday	5	18.51
Thursday	7	25.92
Friday	6	22.22
Saturday	1	3.77
Sunday	0	0
Total	27	

TIME OF VISITS

00.01-06.00	0
06.00-12.00	13
12.01-18.00	10
18.01-00.00	4

DAYS OF VISITS/TIMES - COMBINED

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
00.01-06.00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
06.01-12.00	1	3	1	5	2	1	0
12.01-18.00	0	2	3	1	4	0	0
18.01-00.00	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
	2	6	5	7	0	0	0