



VOLUNTEER VISITING SCHEMES ANNUAL REPORT

2025-2026

Law yn Llaw
at Dde Cymru
diogel, cyfiawn
a chynhwysol

Together for
a safe, just
and inclusive
South Wales

Comisiynydd
yr Heddlu a
Throseddu
De Cymru

South Wales
Police
and Crime
Commissioner

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Police and Crime Commissioner Foreword

I am pleased to present the Volunteer Visiting Schemes Annual Report for 2025-2026.

The Independent Custody Visiting Scheme and Animal Welfare Visiting Scheme are integral to my role in holding South Wales to account on behalf of the people of South Wales. Through independent scrutiny, the schemes provide transparency, reassurance and help maintain public confidence in policing.

This report highlights the invaluable contribution of our independent volunteers, without whom these schemes could not exist. Independent Custody Visitors continue to provide an important safeguard by ensuring that people detained in police custody are treated with dignity, respect and fairness, and that their rights are upheld. Similarly, Animal Welfare Visitors provide vital independent assurance that South Wales Police dogs and horses, which play an important role within the South Wales Police family, receive the highest standards of care and that their welfare needs are consistently met.



I would like to thank South Wales Police officers and staff for their continued professionalism and cooperation towards both schemes, acting on matters raised by volunteers.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all volunteers, past and present, for the time, commitment and skills they bring to these visiting schemes. Their contribution is invaluable, and I remain committed to supporting the continued development of both schemes.

Independent Custody Visiting

What is Independent Custody Visiting?

The Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) scheme, originally established on a voluntary basis, became a statutory requirement through the Police Reform Act 2002, introducing the Codes of Practice for Independent Custody Visiting. The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 then introduced Police and Crime Commissioners and gave them the responsibility for operating and overseeing the scheme in their police area.

The Office of the South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner is responsible for maintaining the scheme in South Wales, appointing volunteers and driving continuous improvements.

Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) are appointed volunteers who live, work or study in South Wales. Their role is carry out unannounced visits to police custody suites in South Wales to monitor the welfare of people who have been detained.

The scheme is an effective mechanism for the independent oversight of police custody, providing valuable public reassurance that individuals detained in police custody are treated fairly, appropriately and with dignity. The scheme plays an important role in promoting transparency, accountability and public confidence in South Wales Police, supporting a key priority of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Role of Independent Custody Visitors



Talk to people who are detained in custody and check their custody records to ensure their rights and entitlements are being met whilst in custody.



Report on the physical condition of custody facilities.



Record their visit findings on a visit report form for the Scheme Manager including highlighting any concerns or good practice.



Attend and engage at quarterly Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Panel Meetings, regular training and the annual conference.

South Wales Scheme Overview

The South Wales Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) Scheme is supported by two Scheme Managers who oversee the overall operation of the scheme on behalf of the Commissioner. The Scheme Managers are responsible for management of the day to day running of the scheme, following up any queries or issues with custody staff, arranging quarterly panel meetings where volunteers and custody staff come together to discuss any issues and outline good practice and provide any training and support to our volunteers.

In 2025 – 26, the South Wales Independent Custody Visiting Scheme was supported by 14 volunteers (as of March 2026) who are split across two panels, East and West. The East panel covers custody suites in Merthyr and Cardiff Bay and West Panel covers custody suites in Swansea and Bridgend.



The panels meet quarterly in joint panel meetings hosted by the Scheme Managers at Police Headquarters in Bridgend. The panels allow volunteers from each area to come together to discuss common issues and differences across South Wales, meet with South Wales Police to raise any issues, concerns or to note good practice and to undertake any training that maybe required.

This report provides an update on scheme activity from 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026.

South Wales Police Custody

South Wales Police operates 4 Custody Suites: The custody suites in Merthyr Tydfil and

- Cardiff Bay- 60 cells
- Merthyr Tydfil- 42 cells
- Swansea- 27 cells
- Bridgend-42 cells

Bridgend are identical facilities built in 2014 and located outside the town centres. Swansea Central Police Station contains the longest-established custody suite in South Wales, while Cardiff Bay Police Station, completed in 2009, has a custody suite arranged over two levels.

NUMBER OF PRIMARY ARRESTS* LEADING TO DETENTION:

25,501

*Primary arrest refers to the offence for which an individual is originally arrested and brought into Custody. Subsequently an individual may be arrested for further offences. This term is used to avoid double counting.

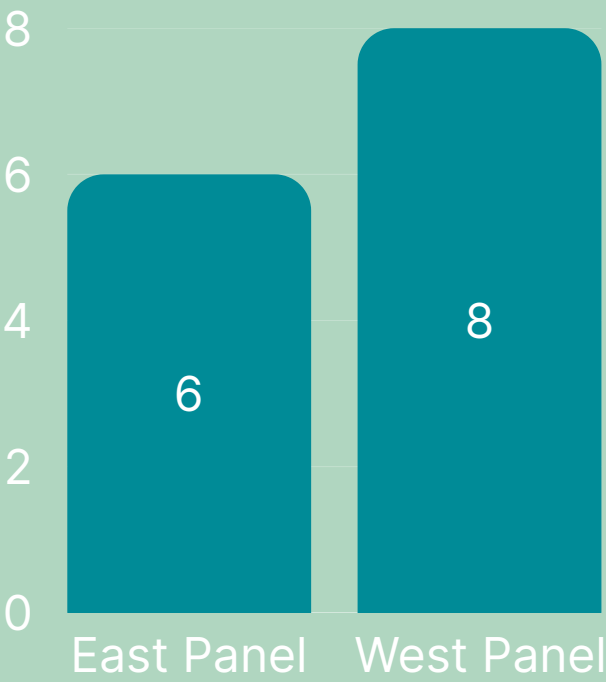


Our Independent Custody Visitors

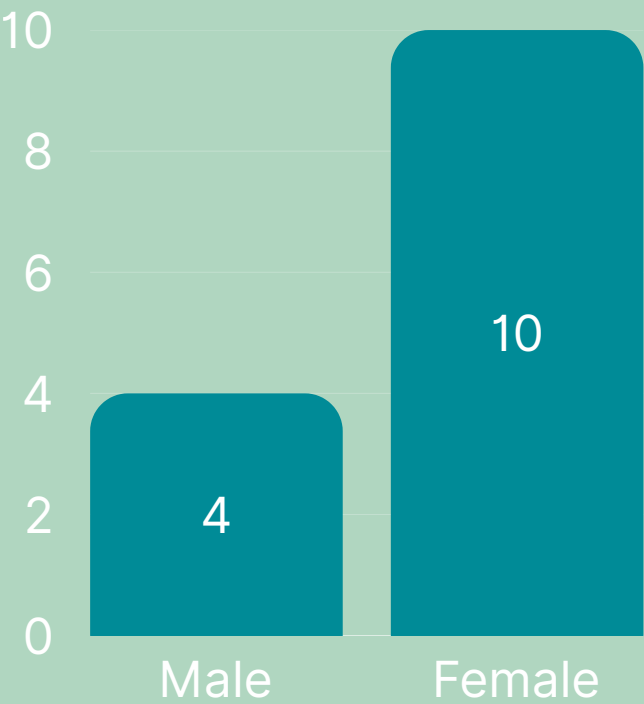
Equality and Diversity Demographics of ICVs

14
volunteers

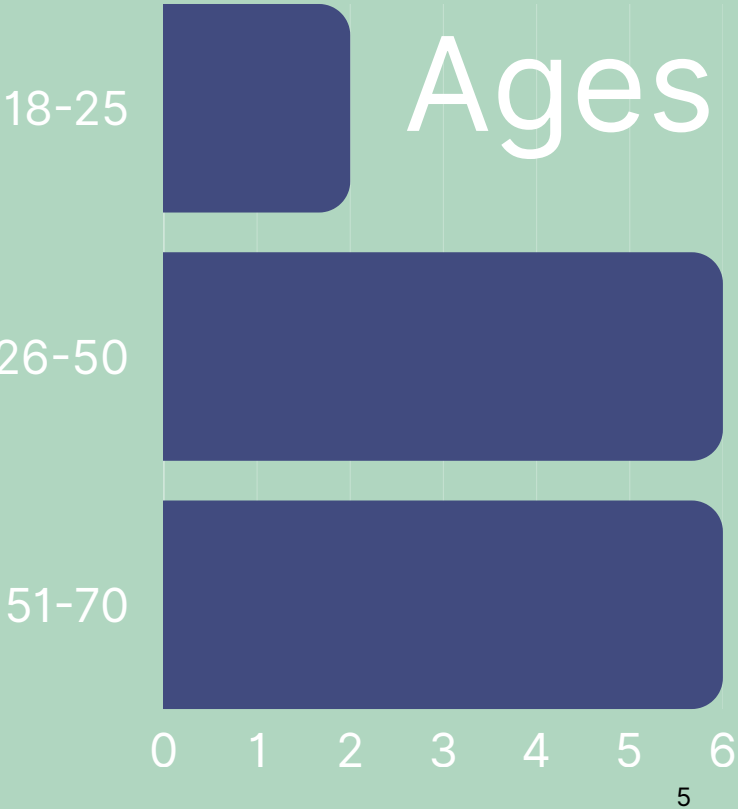
(As of March 2026)



Genders



Ages



Equality and Diversity Demographics of ICVs

Disability	Volunteers
Yes	21%
No	71%
Not defined	7%
Religion	Volunteers
Christianity	29%
Muslim	14%
No religion	43%
Prefer not to say	14%

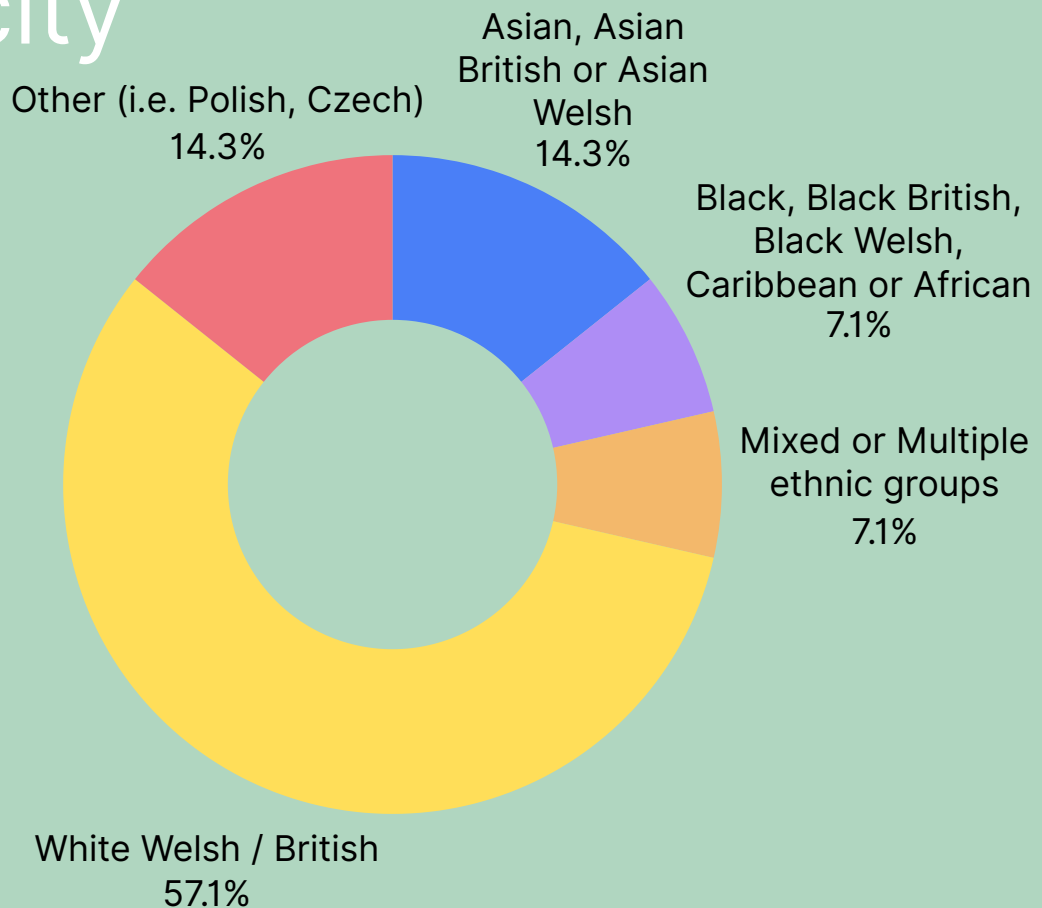


Sexual Orientation	Volunteers
Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual	21%
Heterosexual/Straight	71%
Not defined	7%
Welsh Language	Volunteers
Welsh Speaker	0%
Non-Welsh Speaker	93%
Welsh Learner	7%



Equality and Diversity Demographics of Volunteers

Ethnicity



The South Wales ICV scheme remains committed to ensuring its volunteers reflect the diversity of communities across South Wales. During 2025/26, the scheme undertook several recruitment campaigns, supported by the Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team Wales (EYST), to help increase the diversity of the volunteer cohort and encourage applications from underrepresented groups.

As a result of these recruitment efforts, several volunteers have joined the scheme, with some already undertaking visits and others currently progressing through the onboarding process.

The scheme has seen a positive increase in volunteers from black and ethnic minority backgrounds, helping to ensure that the volunteer cohort better reflects the communities it serves.

The Office thanks EYST for their valuable support throughout the recruitment campaign. Their assistance has played an important role in broadening engagement and attracting a more diverse range of applicants to the scheme.

Training and Development

ICVs are provided with training and support throughout the year to enhance their skills, knowledge and confidence.

In November 2025, the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) launched a new e-learning platform for ICVs which provides comprehensive training and learning packages which all volunteers have access to.

Visitors also received training from custody staff on reviewing custody records, helping them to identify relevant information more effectively and increasing their confidence in carrying out this aspect of their role.

Additional training delivered during the year covered Trauma-Informed Approaches, the Independent Sentencing Review, online security, and three-year refresher training for eligible volunteers.



Scheme Managers also delivered training sessions to new custody detention officers and custody sergeants at South Wales Police Headquarters. These sessions provided an overview of the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme, helping to build positive relationships and increase awareness of the role of ICVs.

Volunteer Voices

This year volunteers responded to an anonymous annual survey which provided the Scheme Managers with an understanding of how ICVs felt about the role and where improvements could be made.

When asked how valued they felt in their role as an ICV, volunteers gave an average score of 4.29 out of 5, indicating a high level of satisfaction and recognition.

Volunteers provided feedback on additional training they would like which is being added to the 2026/27 training plan. They felt informed and updated but wanted to see quicker responses to issues raised in report forms which is being addressed by the Scheme Managers and Custody Management.

4.29
Average Rating

'I enjoy working as part of the team'

'Still loving it, feel very supported'



ICV Data

Visit Data



During 2025/26, a total of 64 visits were made to custody. However, four of the visits were abandoned on the day due to the business of the suites, staffing levels or medical emergency.

No. of ICV visits	No. of Detainees visited by ICVs	No. of Detainees seen or visited by ICVs	No. of detainees held at the time of the visit	Percentage of people seen, held at time of visit
60	200	322	596	54%

As shown above, 200 detainees were visited by ICVs during this period, with a further 122 detainees observed. Detainees may be unavailable for a visit for a range of reasons, including being asleep, intoxicated, in an interview, using hygiene facilities, or where custody staff advise against a visit due to distress or aggressive behaviour. Detainees may also choose to decline a visit.

During 2025/26, a new reporting form was introduced to improve data collection and reporting. This included recording detainees observed through the cell hatch. As this change was implemented part way through the year, the number of detainees observed is likely to be higher than the figure recorded.

During particularly busy periods in custody suites, time constraints on escorting custody staff may limit the number of detainees visitors can see. In these circumstances, visitors prioritise interviews with children and vulnerable adults.



Visit Data Continued



Number of custody records reviewed

37



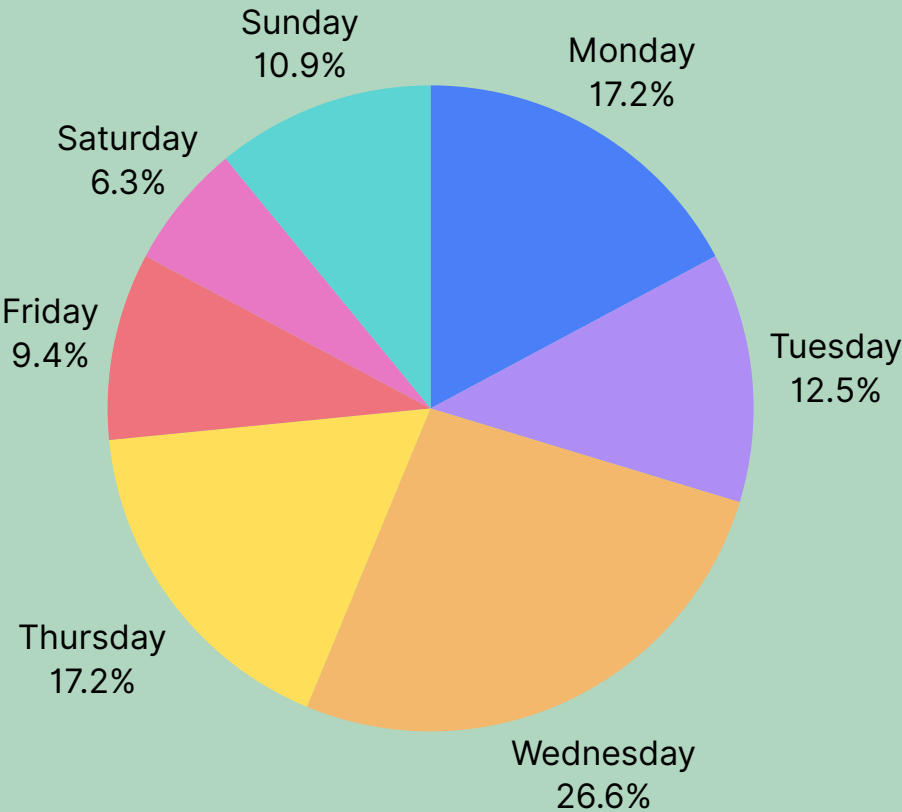
Average wait times for entry into custody

5 mins



Days of the Week

Visits on a Wednesday were most frequent with 17 visits. Visits on a Saturday were least frequent with 4 visits.



Time of Day

Visits were evenly distributed between the morning and afternoon periods.

Time of Day	Number of Visits
00:00-05:59	0
06:00-11:59	27
12:00-17:59	27
18:00-23:59	8

Days and times of visits have been discussed with ICVs, with a commitment to take this into account when planning visits for 2026/27. ICVs are able to visit custody 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days of the year.



ICV Findings

Reporting

A clear escalation process is in place to ensure that issues identified during visits are addressed appropriately and in a timely manner.

ICVs can raise immediate issues with custody staff during a visit, such as requests for an update on detention, access to a phone call, or the provision of food or drink.

Any urgent concerns relating to detainee welfare or custody conditions are escalated immediately to a Custody Sergeant or Inspector and reported to the Scheme Manager.

If a detainee raises a concern or informal complaint, ICVs will discuss this with custody staff and may review the custody record in line with scheme guidelines.

Following each visit, ICVs complete a report detailing their findings, including detainee comments, welfare concerns, requests, good practice and any maintenance or repair issues.

Reports are reviewed by the Scheme Manager and discussed at quarterly panel meetings with ICVs and police representatives to monitor trends, identify themes, and ensure appropriate action is taken.

Achievements and Issues Raised

Food provision in custody remained a recurring area raised by ICVs throughout the year.

This included reduced meal and snack choices, a lack of healthy and vegetarian options on some visits, occasional stock shortages, and some delay in providing food to detainees. When raised by the Scheme Manager, Custody Management confirmed that some branded snacks had been replaced with non-branded alternatives but there is still a suitable variety of options available. Where possible, issues were quickly resolved once highlighted to custody staff and stock replenished where required.

Positive observations included the availability of gluten-free options, improved stock levels following shortages, and staff responsiveness to dietary requirements. In one example of good practice, custody staff sourced food externally for a detainee with specific dietary needs when a suitable option was not available in the custody suite.

Food in Custody

Estates and Facilities

Challenges relating to estates and facilities in custody were identified by ICVs including issues which resulted in cells being out of order. The exercise yard was also unavailable on some occasions due to weather or maintenance issues. While most defects were already being addressed by Custody Management, a new monitoring process has been introduced between Estates and Custody Management to better track and resolve ongoing issues, reducing the number of cells out of order. ICVs continue to report estates issues which are long standing or have been recurring issues.

Stock levels

A small number of reports noted low stock levels for menopause packs which store menopausal products. Once highlighted to custody staff, this was rectified and new stock ordered. Similar reports of low blanket stock and lack of PPE were raised and rectified swiftly.

Distraction and Religious Items

ICVs reported positively that a variety of distraction items for detainees were being consistently offered and many detainees already had an item such as a book before being seen by an ICV.

On a small number of occasions, ICVs noted that some religious materials were not available. Once raised with custody staff, this was addressed and is reviewed as part of the regular custody checks carried out by Custody Management.

Staff Professionalism and Detainee Care

Volunteers recorded numerous examples of positive detainee care, including the use of requested pronouns for a transgender detainee, staff assisting a detainee who used a wheelchair, appropriate separation of juveniles from adult detainees, and the consistent offering of sanitary products to female detainees. ICVs also noted that custody staff responded appropriately to welfare and medical concerns raised during visits. On one occasion, concerns regarding a detainee's mental health and risk assessment were escalated by volunteers; Custody Management provided assurance regarding the assessment process and the safeguards in place.

Visit Access

On a few occasions, visitors chose to abandon visits due to the business of the custody suite. To help mitigate visits being abandoned for this reason, ICVs have been provided with direct contact details for the Custody Bronze Inspector should they need to consider abandoning a visit. The Scheme Manager also continues to deliver training inputs to new custody staff to ensure they understand the role of ICVs and the requirement to provide timely access to custody suites, except where health and safety circumstances apply.



Independent Custody Visiting Association

Who are ICVA?

Independent Custody Visiting is supported nationally by the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA). ICVA promotes and supports the custody visiting process through advocacy, training, publicity, and ongoing guidance for all those involved in the scheme. The South Wales scheme submits quarterly reports to ICVA, contributing to the national picture of independent custody visiting.

Quality Assurance Framework

The Independent Custody Visiting Association's (ICVA) national Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) is designed to promote consistency across Independent Custody Visiting schemes and support a unified approach to the management and delivery of custody visiting. The framework enables schemes to benchmark their performance and drive continuous improvement through a tailored, evidence-based assessment tool that helps identify strengths, highlight areas for development, and support the achievement of best practice.

There are four graded levels of award:

- Code Complaint
- Silver
- Gold
- Platinum



In 2026, the South Wales ICV Scheme was awarded the **Silver** Quality Assurance Framework Award by ICVA.

This year, ICVA introduced 'Volunteer Voices' to the QAF, ensuring that volunteers' views and experiences are reflected in the assessment process.

Animal Welfare Visiting Scheme

Scheme Overview

The South Wales Animal Welfare Scheme is a non-statutory scheme supported by 7 volunteers. The volunteers carry out regular unannounced visits to the Dog and Mounted Section of South Wales Police to observe and report on the welfare, stabling and kennelling arrangements for police horses and dogs.

Visitors report the number of dogs and horses on site and any specific health or welfare concerns, as well as reporting on the physical condition of the site, the condition of animal transport vehicles and any repair issues. Panel meetings are held frequently and are attended by staff, officers, South Wales Police Estates, volunteers, a local veterinarian, and representatives from the Dogs Trust.

A new report form was introduced in this period to capture more detailed information on the welfare of the animals. Reporting now includes a separate report form for police dogs and horses to ensure their specific welfare needs are captured and monitored.



All visits are guided by the five legally recognised animal welfare needs:

- the need for a suitable environment
- the need for a suitable diet
- the need to exhibit normal behaviour patterns
- the need to be housed with, or apart from, other animals as appropriate
- the need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease

2

Panel
Meetings

19

Visits

Achievements and Challenges

Estates

Volunteers raised estate related issues relating to the barn, paddock usability, waste removal, drainage issues and kennels/stables in need of repair. Issues are raised with the Yard Manager and discussed at panel meetings which now includes a member of the Estates Team. Many positive improvements have since been made including a new hay barn, repairs to kennels/stables, drainage repairs and amenements to the paddocks to prevent waterlogging.

14



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South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner

Staff

Visitors regularly comment on the positive attitude of staff, highlighting their welcoming and friendly approach. Staff are consistently willing to answer questions and demonstrate a clear commitment to the welfare of the police dogs and horses in their care.

Animal Welfare & Care

Volunteers frequently report that the welfare needs of the dogs and horses present during visits have been met. On one occasion, a dog was observed to be anxious while housed in a kennel and was subsequently moved to a larger, more open area to better support its welfare.

Visitors also noted that horses benefit from regular interaction with one another. Consideration is being given by staff to further enrichment opportunities for both dogs and horses to support their wellbeing.

Vehicles

Dogs waiting in vehicles were reported to have water available, doors/boot open and air conditioning on. Volunteers observed that vehicles were in good condition and issues relating to ripped mats on one occasion were quickly rectified when reported to staff.

First Aid

Volunteers noted that dog handlers did not have access to dedicated dog first aid kits. This issue was promptly addressed, with dog first aid kits purchased and made available to staff. In addition, staff have completed dog first aid training, further strengthening their ability to respond to welfare needs and emergencies.

Dogs Trust

The scheme is recognised and supported by Dogs Trust, who provide specialist expertise in dog welfare. Dogs Trust representatives attend panel meetings, visits, dog training and other scrutiny related sessions.

In relation to training, volunteers have been provided access to 'Dogs Trust Campus', an online courses platform that provides training in respect of dog behaviours and welfare education aimed at police officers and staff who care for working dogs. Volunteers have completed a number of online courses on various topics this year including dog body language, dog grooming, enrichment and feeding.



Additional Animal Welfare Scrutiny

During this period, the Animal Welfare Scheme continued to promote a holistic approach to assessing and monitoring animal welfare. Alongside regular visits, which ensured that all animals were seen and their welfare considered, volunteers and representatives from Dogs Trust participated in additional scrutiny sessions and observations to support ongoing oversight and continuous improvement. Feedback from the sessions was shared and discussed with South Wales Police with actions agreed to address specific feedback and positive practice shared with wider teams where appropriate.

Dog Training

In October 2025, panel members including Dogs Trust observed general-purpose dog training to review the welfare of the dogs during training. Observation of dog training will be repeated in 2026/27.

Annual Vet Check Scrutiny Session

This year panel members also carried out a scrutiny exercise which involved reviewing the annual vet checks for the police dogs and horses, facilitated by the Scheme Manager.

Home Kennel Checks Scrutiny Session

Supported by the Scheme Manager, Volunteers and Dogs Trust reviewed a sample of home kennel check forms completed by South Wales Police to ensure kennel checks were being performed to a high standard and kennel environments meet required welfare standards.



This year, a partnership with the British Horse Society was established, with representatives visiting the site to provide welfare advice and feedback on the Scheme. This relationship will continue to develop, helping to inform future improvements and strengthen the scrutiny and welfare oversight of South Wales Police mounted section.



South Wales Police

Reflections

Jason Herbert, Head of Custody Services

“Over the past year, Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) have continued to play a vital role in supporting transparency, accountability, and public confidence within South Wales Police custody facilities. Through their regular and unannounced visits, ICVs provide independent scrutiny of the treatment, rights, and welfare of people detained in police custody.

Their observations help ensure that custody practices remain aligned with legal requirements, human rights standards, and the high expectations rightly held by the public.

The relationship between ICVs, custody staff, and the Custody Scrutiny Panel remains positive and constructive. Independent feedback provides valuable assurance where standards are being met, while also identifying opportunities for improvement. This collaborative approach supports a culture of openness, learning, and continuous development across our custody suites.

From a custody leadership perspective, the independent insight provided by ICVs is an important part of ensuring that detainees are treated with dignity, respect, and fairness. The willingness of visitors to challenge processes, ask questions, and provide impartial observations strengthens our ability to review practices and make evidence-based improvements where required.

The continued contribution of Independent Custody Visitors provides reassurance to both South Wales Police and the communities we serve that custody services are subject to meaningful external oversight. Their work helps promote public confidence, supports the welfare of detainees, and contributes to the ongoing development of safe, ethical, and professional custody environments.”

Adrian Snook, Police Dog and Mounted Section Chief Inspector



“We have been grateful for the support of the Police and Crime Commissioner’s office in setting up this scheme which has provided independent scrutiny of our animal welfare provision and ensures that we continue to raise the standards of care of our working animals. We will continue to welcome the volunteers onto our premises and work with associated partners so that our animals have the best possible conditions to serve the public of South Wales and beyond.”

Looking Forward 2026/27

Independent Custody Visiting Scheme



The Scheme will continue to build on its Silver Quality Assurance Framework Award, working towards Gold status by addressing identified areas for development and ensuring the highest standards of independent scrutiny, governance, and volunteer engagement are consistently achieved.

A priority for the coming year is to onboard newly recruited volunteers and continue targeted recruitment activity to increase volunteer numbers.



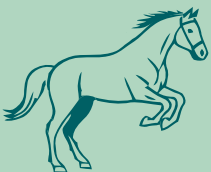
The Scheme will continue to provide volunteer training and development opportunities, delivering a training programme that reflects both operational requirements and volunteer feedback.

The Scheme Manager will work with visitors to encourage more weekend and late-night visits.



The Scheme will explore digital solutions to streamline the reporting process, enabling faster submission of reports and more timely access to information.

Animal Welfare Visiting Scheme



Continue to build relationships with equine specialist organisations to strengthen scrutiny of South Wales Police Mounted Section.

The Scheme will continue to strengthen its holistic approach to animal welfare scrutiny through regular visits, observation of dog training activities, and the review of relevant welfare records.



Get in touch

Interested in becoming an Independent Custody Visitor in South Wales?

Please visit www.southwalescommissioner.org.uk/volunteer-visiting-schemes/ or email volunteer@south-wales.police.uk for information on how to apply.

For more information about your Commissioner and the work of the South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner's Office please visit us at:



[/commissionersw](https://www.instagram.com/commissionersw)

www.southwalescommissioner.org.uk

Or contact us via:

commissioner@south-wales.police.uk

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Independent Custody Visiting Association

If you would like more information on the role of the national Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) please visit: <https://icva.org.uk/>

<https://www.nationalpreventivemechanism.org.uk/>

The Commissioner and their team express their sincere gratitude to all volunteers who have worked tirelessly to ensure the welfare and rights of detainees in South Wales Police custody and police animals have been upheld. The knowledge, expertise and commitment that visitors continue to bring to the scheme are highly valued and play an essential role in supporting the oversight and accountability of South Wales Police.

