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Kent's Independent Custody Visiting Scheme wins Gold!

Kent's Independent Custody Visiting Scheme has received national recognition after being awarded the Gold standard by the Independent Custody Visiting Association.

The award recognises the excellent standard of custody visiting and volunteer management in Kent. Independent Custody Visitors are trained volunteers from the local community who make unannounced visits to police custody suites to check on the rights, entitlements, wellbeing and dignity of detainees.

The scheme is managed by the Office of the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner and plays a vital role in providing independent reassurance to the public. Visitors submit reports after each visit, helping the PCC and Kent Police identify good practice, address concerns and maintain high standards of care in custody.

The latest ICV Annual Report also highlights the high standard of care routinely provided within Kent Police custody. Feedback from detainees remains positive, with ICVs consistently reporting that people are treated with dignity, respect and professionalism during their time in custody. Read the full report here - <https://www.kent-pcc.gov.uk/what-we-do/holding-kent-police-to-account/independent-custody-visitors/>

The OPCC would like to thank all volunteer ICVs for their dedication, as well as custody teams across Kent for their continued focus on detainee welfare, transparency and improvement.



"Receiving the Gold award is a significant achievement and reflects the strength of Kent's Independent Custody Visiting scheme, the dedication of our volunteer visitors and the constructive relationship they have with custody teams across the county. I am extremely grateful to our ICVs for the vital role they play in providing independent reassurance to the public, and to Kent Police custody staff for their ongoing commitment to maintaining high standards of care."

— Matthew Scott, Kent Police and Crime Commissioner

NATIONAL UPDATE FROM MATTHEW SCOTT

In addition to my role as Police and Crime Commissioner for Kent, I undertake work on a national level with my colleagues. Together, we lobby for funding, new powers, legislative change and better support for victims, and we do achieve some successes. I currently lead for this group, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, on victims, workforce and mental health, as well as representing communities on the working groups dealing with the Government's proposed policing reforms.

I am grateful to all of those who completed my recent survey on this, which showed widespread opposition in Kent to merging with other police forces. Alongside those changes are proposed changes to governance that will create a disjointed system for local residents and Officers alike.

Based on where you live, police governance will either be delivered by: a Mayor; a Mayor responsible for more than one Police Force; Police and Crime Board made up of councillors; Police and Crime Board split between Mayors and councillors; Foundation Strategic Authority, acting as a Police and Crime Board; or a Police, Fire and Crime Board.

Policing Priorities will be set by the Home Secretary, Welsh Government, Chief Constables, one of the different types of Local Policing Body, Local Policing Area Commanders, Local Policing Area Commanders with Mayors where the local policing area and mayoralty are not co-terminus, and ward Beat Officers.

This convoluted system will disadvantage neighbourhoods, policing and partnerships. And in none of these systems would be the agility to address short notice changes in funding or the breakdown in partnerships.

That's why I hope the new Government will re-invigorate the devolution programme, which has stalled. Deliver more directly-elected Mayors, with the powers, grip and dynamism to properly support our communities; not committees that will meet rarely and will not be accountable to you.

As well as the work on policing reform, I have also been involved in the Police Leadership Commission, which reported recently (click [here](#) to read the report). In Kent, we have been fortunate that our Force has received successive "Good" ratings for leadership, one of only six Forces to achieve this grading across the country. However, it does reflect poorly on national Police leadership.

The review makes a number of recommendations which I hope will benefit frontline officers and staff. As with any of these reviews, that is contingent on the Government and College of Policing setting out how they will be given the time to develop, and how it will all be funded.

I can assure you though, despite the amount of advocacy I do on a national basis to better support victims and our neighbourhoods – my most important role is here in Kent which I continue to deliver fully!

Looking Ahead

For the rest of 2026, the PCC and OPCC will continue to focus on cutting crime, supporting victims and building trust.

Community safety and local priorities: The PCC will continue to work with Kent Police, councils, community groups and residents on issues that matter locally, including rural crime, theft, waste crime, anti-social behaviour and road safety.

Annual Policing Survey: The OPCC will also be asking residents, businesses and community partners to have their say through the Annual Policing Survey. Feedback from the survey will help shape the PCC's understanding of local concerns and the issues people want to see prioritised across Kent and Medway.

Supporting victims: The OPCC will continue to fund and promote specialist services for victims and witnesses of crime, helping people access support when they need it most.

Independent scrutiny and volunteering: Following the success of the ICV recruitment campaign and the scheme's Gold award, the OPCC will continue to promote opportunities for people to get involved in independent scrutiny and volunteering.

Fair funding and the future of policing: The PCC will continue to make the case for fair and sustainable funding for policing and victim services, while keeping residents informed about national discussions on police reform, accountability and future governance.

Keeping you informed: Residents can expect more updates through the PCC's newsletter, website and social media channels, with regular stories showing how the OPCC is listening to communities, supporting partners and delivering against the Police and Crime Plan.

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In The Next Edition

In our next edition, we will bring you an update on our commissioned services and the latest round of the Police Property Act Fund. Stay tuned for details on how these programmes are supporting communities across Kent and Medway.

The Office of the Kent Police
and Crime Commissioner
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