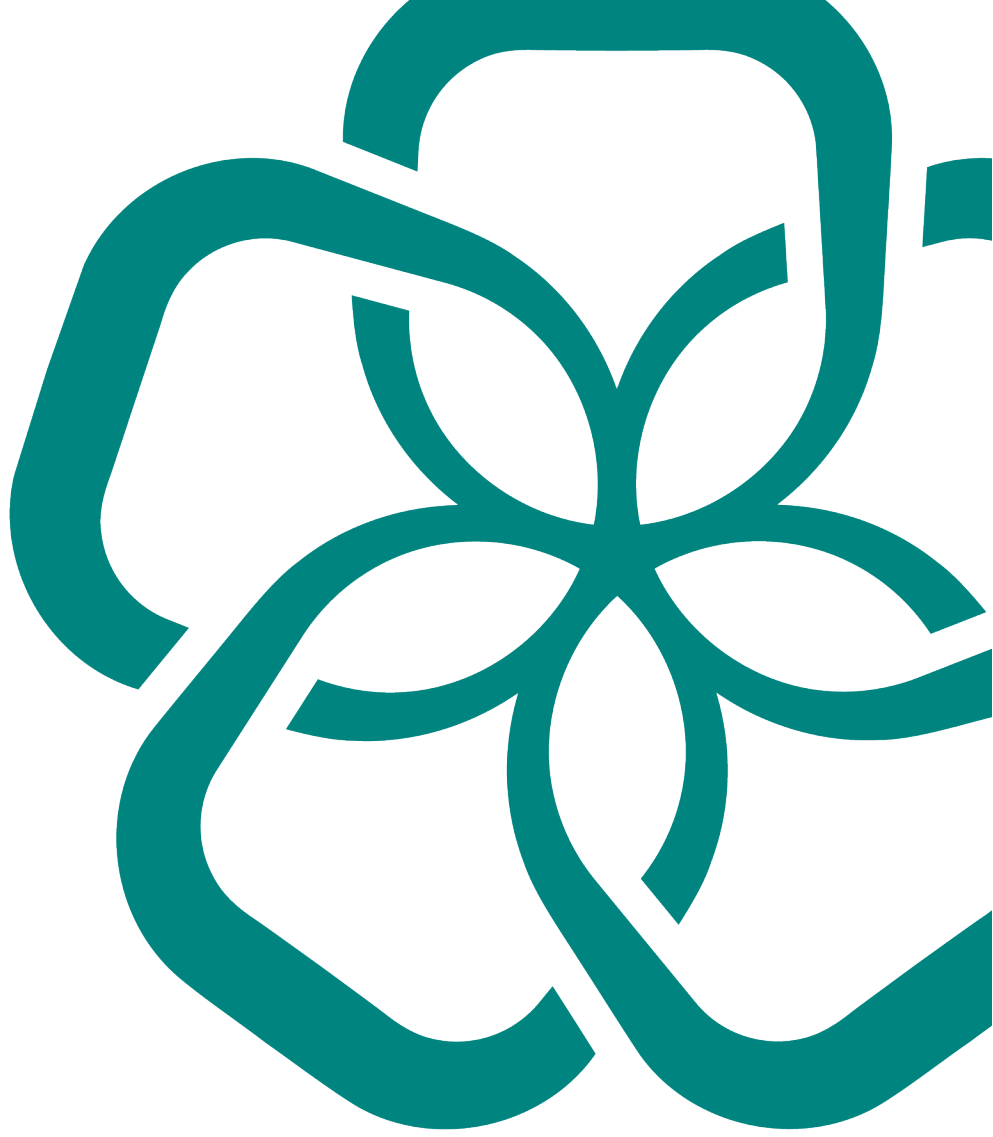




West
Yorkshire
Combined
Authority

Tracy
Brabin
Mayor of
West Yorkshire



**West Yorkshire
Independent Custody
Visiting Scheme Annual
Report
2025-2026**

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Foreword

Our team of dedicated volunteers play a crucial role in safeguarding the rights, welfare, and dignity of individuals detained in police custody. Through their regular, unannounced visits to our custody suites, they provide an essential independent check, helping to strengthen public confidence in how policing operates behind closed doors.

Over the past year, our Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) have shown exceptional commitment, carrying out their duties with professionalism and compassion. Their observations, feedback, and constructive engagement with custody staff make a direct contribution to continuous improvement and accountability within West Yorkshire Police, while also helping to ensure that custody is managed lawfully, safely, and with respect. I was delighted to meet and welcome our newly appointed volunteers at their first in-person ICV evening. Through the work of our Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs), we are able to ensure that police custody facilities operate with the highest standards of care, respect, and accountability.



The findings set out in this report and personally accompanying two independent custody visits this year provides me with reassurance that West Yorkshire Police continue to treat those in custody with dignity and respect, while delivering appropriate care. I am committed to ensuring that all communities have a voice, and the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme is an integral element of that.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to our dedicated ICVs for the commitment and care they bring to this role. I also recognise the ongoing openness and cooperation of West Yorkshire Police, whose willingness to engage reinforces our shared commitment to maintaining high standards of policing.

Alison Lowe OBE

Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime

Overview

Key Summary Data

- 51,329 people were arrested and detained in police custody; on average, 140 people per day.
- Leeds and Bradford were the busiest suites, holding over 42% of the total number of detained people.
- ICVs undertook 308 visits and saw or spoke to 1,307 detainees.
- The most common requests from detainees were for a drink, a blanket, access to the exercise yard, or to see a healthcare professional.
- Custody visits took place at every custody suite and were evenly spread over each day of the week.
- ICVs reported 228 comments to the Policing and Crime Team, some of which were for information, and some required a response from West Yorkshire Police.
- The most commonly reported issues related to the poor maintenance of kitchen equipment, specifically food probes and microwaves, colleagues feeling that staffing levels were low, and the inconsistent supply of blankets. Almost a quarter of the 228 comments (51) included specifically positive feedback.



33

volunteers



308 visits



1370 detainees seen or spoken to

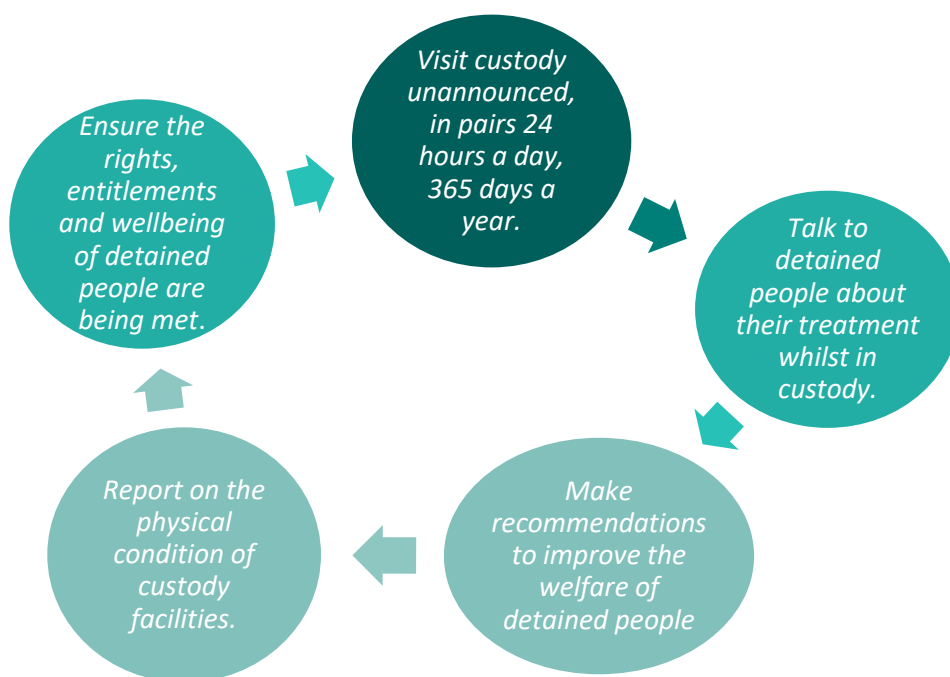
Introduction

Administering an effective Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) scheme is a statutory responsibility of the Mayor as Police and Crime Commissioner. The Scheme is administered by the Policing and Crime Team on behalf of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime. Robust systems must be in place to ensure that any issues with custody conditions or the people in them are highlighted and dealt with in the most appropriate way.

The ICV procedure is guided by the Home Office Code of Practice on independent custody visiting, which is issued in accordance with section 51 of the Police Reform Act 2002, as amended by section 117 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 and paragraph 299 of Schedule 16 to the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) are volunteer members of the local community who are unconnected to the police or the criminal justice system, whose independence therefore allows them to monitor the detention conditions and procedures in West Yorkshire to provide transparency and reassurance to the public that detention processes and policies are being adhered to. ICVs talk to detained people about their treatment whilst in custody.

What does an ICV do?



Many people arrive in custody without understanding their rights and entitlements and it can be frightening and stressful, especially if it will be their first experience in custody. Independent Custody Visitors ensure that detainees understand their rights and entitlements whilst in custody and check on the detainee's general feeling and welfare and how they have been treated by custody staff. Visitors can also check around the cells, and some areas of the custody suite, for example the food preparation area. Visitors complete a report during each visit to record their findings.

Police Custody in West Yorkshire

West Yorkshire Police operate six main custody suites with a total cell capacity of 185 cells:

Suite	Number of Cells	Detainee Throughput 2025-2026
Leeds District, Elland Road	40	10,806
Wakefield District, Havertop Lane	35	8,797
Leeds District, Stainbeck	35	5,569
Bradford District, Trafalgar House	34	12,603
Kirklees District, Huddersfield	21	8,012
Calderdale District, Halifax	21	5,311

A resilience suite is located in Pudsey with 22 available cells. The resilience suite can be used during periods of high demand, such as festivals, public holidays, protests, or sporting events, as well as being used if a main suite needed to close for any reason, such as refurbishment works. Stainbeck was previously used as a resilience suite and opened as a permanent custody suite in July 2025, which is why the throughput number is slightly lower than you would usually see. The North-East region’s Terrorism Act 2000 (TACT) suite is housed in West Yorkshire. The TACT suite is a specialised suite used to detain people arrested under TACT legislation.

West Yorkshire Police continued to invest in their custody provision and Pudsey underwent a refurbishment and an example of what the full custody estate will eventually feel like. The suite has corporate custody colours of lilac walls and grey doors, and has cloud lighting replicating natural daylight, and mural-style wall art.

Should a custody suite close or the resilience suite open this is communicated to the Policing and Crime team by Custody Services so that ICVs can be updated and arrange visits in accordance with standard protocols.



Custody Visting Data

In West Yorkshire, it is expected that as a collective ICVs will conduct one visit per suite, per week; which equates to 260 visits per year which increased to 312 when Stainbeck permanently opened in July 2025. This year, 308 visits took place, which is slightly up on last year's visits.

On average, people detained in West Yorkshire spent 11 hours and 8 minutes in custody.

Bradford was the busiest suite with 12,603 detainees held during 2025/26.

Kirklees and Calderdale were the most visited custody suites by ICVs, with 52 total visits each, closely followed by Wakefield (51), Leeds (50), Bradford (48), then Stainbeck (36)

Custody suite colleagues are obliged to enable ICV access to custody suite as soon as practicable after they arrive. The average wait time for ICVs gaining access to custody was in just under 4 minutes and is comfortably within the service level agreement of entry within 10 minutes.

Detainees Seen

ICVs prioritise visits to women, children and vulnerable adults. A child is anyone under the age of 18. ICVs are informed which detainees they are unable to visit due to safety, i.e. if a detained person is presenting violent behaviours, intoxicated etc. ICVs select who they wish to visit after considering these factors. If a detainee cannot be spoken to, ICVs can request to view the person via CCTV or via the cell hatch where this causes minimal upset to the detained person. Sometimes ICVs select a person to speak to and when they arrive at their cell, the person is no longer available due to being out of their cell or being released. A person can be out of their cell for a number of reasons such as being in interview, speaking to their solicitor, or seeing the healthcare practitioner.

Detainees are not obliged to accept a visit from ICVs, although 94% of detainees who were offered a visit, accepted one. ICVs are encouraged to make 'self-introductions' rather than being introduced by a uniformed custody colleague to amplify the ICV's independent position. ICVs receive specific training on messaging and personal skills to support them with being approachable and to manage their unconscious bias in their communication and body language. The combined percentage in the below table is the number of people (both children and adults) spoken to or observed by ICVs at the time of their visit.

Percentage of detainees spoken to from those selected by ICVs		
Children	Adults	Combined
83%	69%	71%

Percentage of detainees who were observed by those selected by ICVs		
Children	Adults	Combined

12%	18%	16%
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Visits per Suite

The chart below shows the total number of visits in each custody suite. ICVs visited each suite proportionately achieving a consistent and co-ordinated approach.

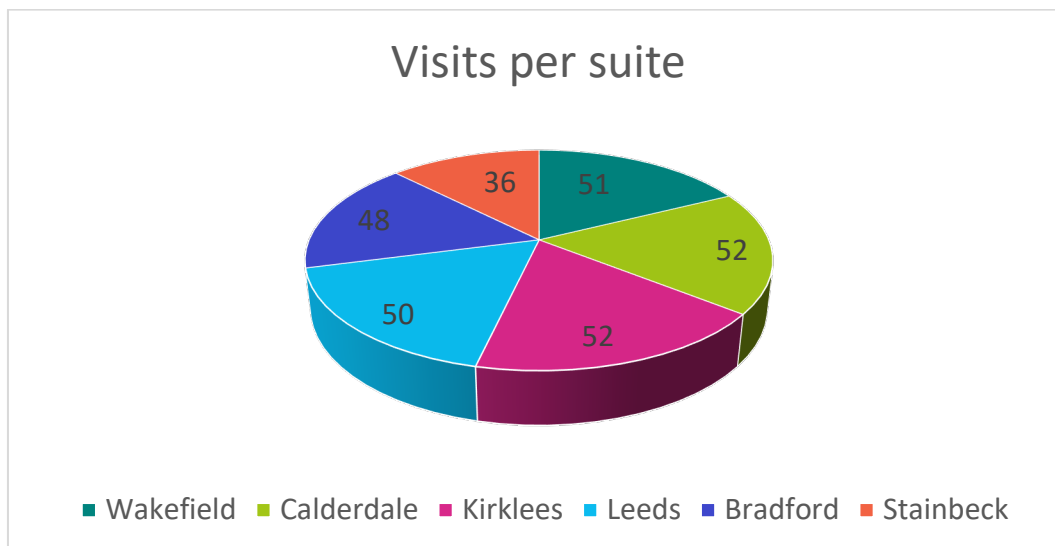


Figure 4 shows the number of visits to custody suites.

Time of Day

ICVs are able to visit custody 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days of the year and are encouraged to make at least one visit outside of usual sociable hours i.e. before 08:00 and after 20:00. During 2025-26, 24 visits took place before 08:00 or after 20:00, all of which were between 20:00 and 21:00. The time of day that visits are undertaken is dependent on the available hours of our volunteer ICVs, who must carry out their visits in pairs around personal and professional commitments.

Days of the week

Visits were made over an equal spread during the week, visits on a Wednesday were most frequent with 55 visits, and the least with 32 visits taking place, was Sunday, which is a change from last year, when Wednesday had the least number of visits.

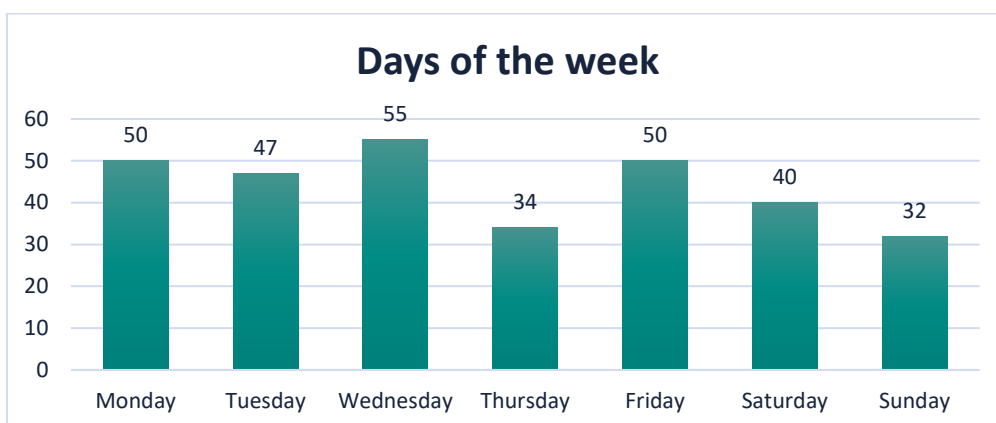


Figure 6 shows the number of visits carried out against the day of the week.

Reporting

ICVs complete a report for each visit which records their findings. As well as reporting on a person’s rights and entitlements, and the condition of the cells and the custody suite, the ICV’s report can include anything the ICVs feel is important, and usually includes information about detainee requests, or comments from detainees such as an update, exercise, or a drink. Although responding to detainee requests is not the role of ICVs, we record this information to monitor trends which could indicate an underlying issue.

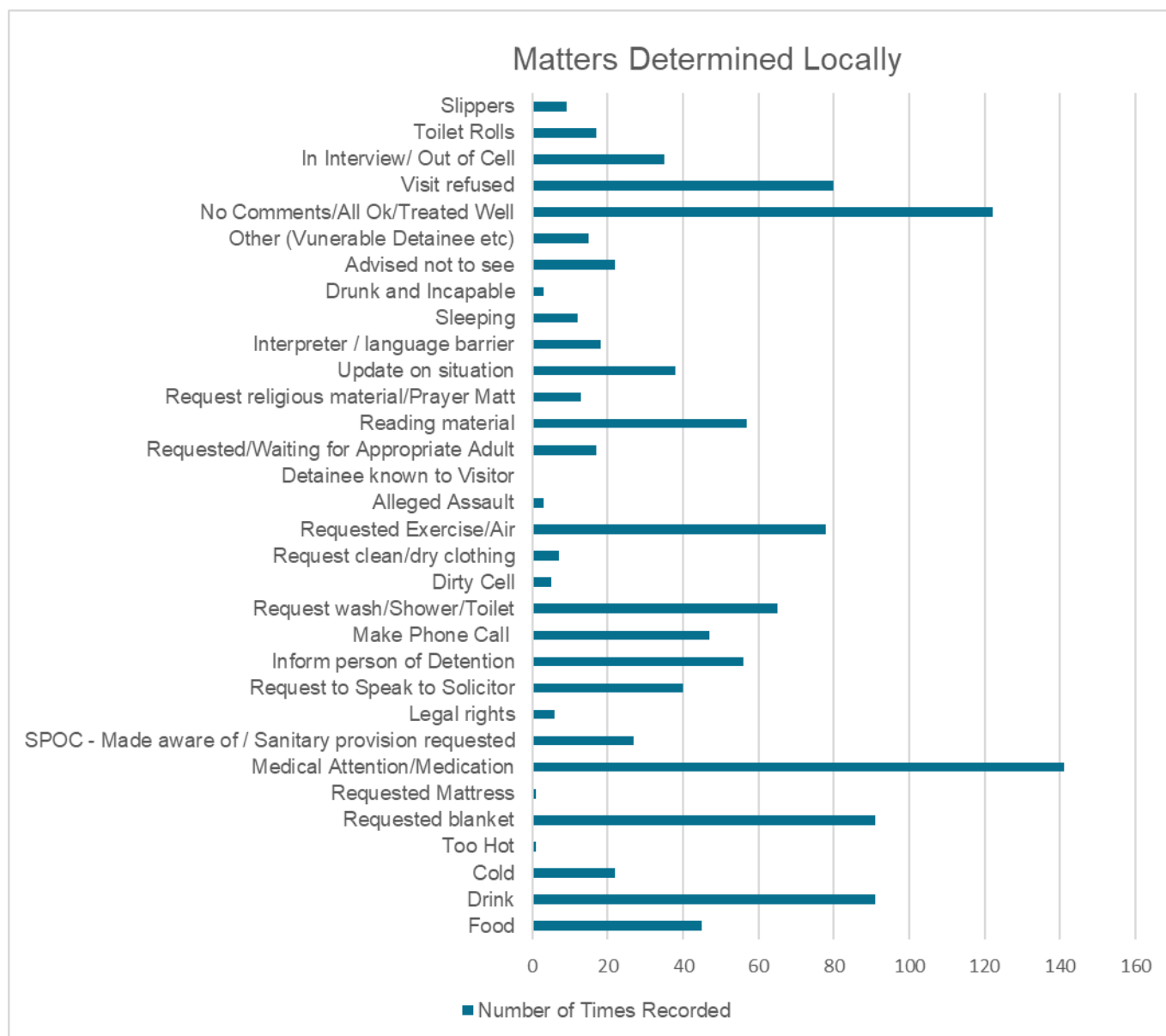


Figure 3 shows the number of each request type made by detainees where a resolution could be considered/ provided by custody staff on site.

The top recorded issues include medical attention or medication, a blanket, a drink, use of the exercise yard and access to wash facilities or a shower. Medical attention covers a wide-ranging field of requests, from pain relief for a minor ailment, such as a headache, sourcing medication from home, or seeing to minor injuries such as aches and bruising.

Broader Issues

ICVs also record wider issues relating to their time spent in custody for the Policing and Crime Team to pick up with West Yorkshire Police, these are usually questions or concerns which cannot be addressed **on the day**. The responses from Custody Services are logged and monitored for themes and fed back to ICVs. 228 issues were reported to the Policing and Crime Team in 2025-26 that the suite could not resolve on site. These issues included but are not limited to resourcing, physical equipment, cleanliness and food supplied.

As a direct result of ICV feedback, the availability of new ligature cutters within custody suites has been improved. Ligature cutters are now immediately replaceable on site without the need to order from a central team.

All issues reported back to the Policing and Crime Team are followed up with Custody Services and a full response is shared with the ICVs.

Poor maintenance of kitchen equipment

Custody colleagues feeling staffing levels were low.

Inconsistent supply of blankets.

Almost a quarter of the 228 comments (51) included specifically positive feedback.

Our Volunteers

In March 2026, West Yorkshire had thirty-three volunteers. The team welcomed fifteen new ICV's who joined the scheme in January 2026 after a successful recruitment campaign.

ICVs are encouraged to conduct visits with colleague ICVs they have not previously undertaken a visit with. Sharing experiences and differing communication techniques is essential in ensuring the continued development and growth of both the scheme and the volunteers. ICVs are also encouraged to undertake unsociable hours visits, as we know from our data that all of our visits were undertaken between 08:00 and 21:00.

Support, Training and Development for ICVs

ICVs are provided with training and support throughout the year, benefitting from specific sessions dedicated to team building, networking, information sharing, learning, and questions. Sessions were held in person in April 2025, September 2025, October 2025, January 2026 and covered a range of topics including focus sessions on His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMIFCRS) inspection reports and Appropriate Adults. ICVs influence the focus topics and can request topics which are of particular interest.

West Yorkshire Police Custody colleagues attend every session and provide operational updates, subject matter expert advice and responses to questions.

TACT Detentions

A National Picture

The threat to the UK from terrorism remains substantial, meaning an attack is likely.

The Counter Terrorism Policing network is currently working on a record number of more than 800 investigations. These investigations, the majority in partnership with MI5, focus on a range of activities, including fundraising, radicalising and preparing acts of terrorism.

Demand continues to grow, as does the complexity of what the police are dealing with. The police are seeing increasingly fragmented ideologies, a continuing shift towards self-initiated terrorism and hateful online ideologies filtering into the lives of young people. Working closely with MI5 and other partners the police prioritise their resources against those cases that pose the most risk to the public.

Since March 2017, Counter Terrorism Policing and UK Intelligence Services have stopped 43 attacks.

In the year ending 31 December 2025, 3,034 arrests for terrorism-related activity were made representing a rise of 1,114% compared with the previous year (250). This reflects the impact of Palestine Action proscription: 2,779 out of 3,034 arrests (92%) were linked to supporting Palestine Action, following its proscription on 5 July 2025 and 255 arrests related to other terrorist offences.

40 individuals aged 17 and under were arrested, including one linked to supporting Palestine Action, with children making up 15% of non-Palestine Action arrests (39 of 253) where the age is known, down from 16% in the year ending December 2024

North-East Region

West Yorkshire houses the North-East Region's Terrorism Act (TACT) facility, which is opened on a reactive, need basis and is used to detain people who are arrested under PACE Code H and PACE Code I legislation. Persons detained under PACE Code H are persons who have been arrested on suspicion of being, or have been concerned in the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism or have been arrested for statutory offences as detailed in the Terrorism Act. PACE code I governs the detention, treatment and questioning by police of persons in detention under section 27 of, and Schedule 6 to, the National Security Act 2023.

Persons can be detained for up to 14 days, significantly longer than those arrested under PACE Code C of whom can be detained for up to 96 hours without charge; and the rights, entitlements and suite change accordingly to reflect the differing needs.

Each detained person held at the North-East Region's TACT facility was spoken to by an Independent Custody Visitor within 24 hours. Issues raised by detainees with ICVs and locally resolved on site by custody staff included requests for reading material, a change of clothes and medical attention.

The TACT ICV Visit Protocol accommodates 24/7 contact between TACT ICVs and the custody suite during evenings and states the need to arrange an ICV visit daily, where available.

TACT ICV Volunteers

ICVs must hold at least 18 months service as a PACE Code C ICV, before being able to undertake TACT Visits. ICVs undergo further vetting and receive additional specialist training.

Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation (IRTL)

The Independent Reviewer's role is to inform the public and political debate on anti-terrorism law in the United Kingdom. This is done via regular reports for the Home Secretary or Treasury and laid before Parliament, in evidence to parliamentary committees, in articles and speeches, in media interviews and debates and online platforms

The role has complete independence from government, and comes with access based on a very high degree of clearance to secret and sensitive national security information and personnel. In performing the role, the IRTL speaks to the widest possible range of people with experience of how anti-terrorism law operates, including the police, those who are stopped, arrested and detained and ICVs. All ICV visit report forms with those who are arrested under Pace Code H and/or PACE Code I are sent to the IRTL for review by the Policing and Crime Team.

In May 2019, Jonathan Hall KC had been appointed by the Home Secretary as Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, and re-appointed in March 2022, with a further extension (until November 2026) in November 2024. In addition, in February 2024 Jonathan was appointed as the first Independent Reviewer of State Threats Legislation under the National Security Act 2023, which requires him to review the new offences and powers created by the 2023 Act, together with ports powers used in connection with hostile state activity under Schedule 3 to the Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Act 2019.

Jonathan's annual terrorism reports can be found on the [IRTL website](#).



Jonathan Hall KC

Governance

ICVA Quality Assurance Framework

The Independent Custody Visiting Association's (ICVA) national Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) is designed to bring continuity between schemes and unify the way in which custody visiting is managed and delivered. Our assessment was undertaken by the Independent Custody Visitors' Association, and the West Yorkshire scheme has continued to be recognised as operating at a 'Gold' standard, which is the level we applied for.



West Yorkshire underwent a further assessment in 2025-26 and the result will be available from ICVA in 2026-27.

The Quality Assurance awards were introduced by ICVA to help schemes:

- ✓ Reflect on how they comply with the Code of Practice, the legislation that underpins custody visiting.
- ✓ Celebrate areas of strength.
- ✓ Promote custody visiting and the achievements schemes have made.
- ✓ Drive performance and increase sharing of good practice.

There were four graded levels of award:

- ★ Code Complaint - Scheme meets statutory requirements and necessary volunteer standards.
- ★ Silver – Scheme provides a good standard of custody visiting and volunteer management.
- ★ Gold – Scheme provides an excellent standard of custody visiting and volunteer management.
- ★ Platinum – Scheme provided an outstanding standard of custody visiting and volunteer management.

Custody Detention Scrutiny Panel

The West Yorkshire Custody Detention Scrutiny Panel (CDSP) is a group made up of local people selected from across the policing area, to represent local communities in conversations with police officers and staff who are actively involved in the detention and custody environments across our county. Over recent years, national independent reviews such as the 'Lammy Review,' and the 'Angiolini Review' have identified issues of disparity and inequality in the Criminal Justice System across the UK which has led to a trust deficit between communities and the police up and down the country. The West Yorkshire CDSP is given unprecedented access to police information in order to objectively and independently review matters of disproportionality and police/detainee behaviour with an ambition to reassure the public that concerns are taken seriously and dealt with transparently. The areas of focus are determined by the independent panel members and currently include use of force, mental health, children and strip searches. Independent Custody Visitors form part of the CDSP membership. If you are interested in joining the West Yorkshire Custody Detention Scrutiny Panel, or would like more information, please email: policingandcrime@westyorks-ca.gov.uk

Useful Information and Contact Details

policingandcrime@westyorks-ca.gov.uk

**Policing and Crime Team
West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Wellington House
40-50 Wellington Street
Leeds
West Yorkshire
LS1 2DE
Tel: 0113 3481653**

(please leave a message and a member of the team will call you back)

Interested in Joining?

If you would like more information on becoming an Independent Custody Visitor in West Yorkshire then please email: policingandcrime@westyorks-ca.gov.uk

Further Reading

Policing and Crime Team

For more information regarding the work of the Policing and Crime Team for West Yorkshire please visit: [Policing and Crime - West Yorkshire Combined Authority \(westyorks-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/policing-and-crime) and Custody Visiting [Custody Visiting - West Yorkshire Combined Authority \(westyorks-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/custody-visiting)

West Yorkshire Mayor

[West Yorkshire Combined Authority](https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/mayor)

West Yorkshire Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime

[West Yorkshire Combined Authority](https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/deputy-mayor-for-policing-and-crime)

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/>