

March 2021

**Independent Custody Visiting Scheme (ICVS)**

**Policy for return to physical custody visits 29th March 21**

**Background**

Due to the announcement of the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) on 17th March 2020 the UK government recommended that all employees work from home, where possible due to the high risk of infection. GMCA Police and Crime Team took the decision, to protect the health and safety of ICVs and withdrew from physical visits in all Custody Suites. This was replaced by a telephone visiting service which commenced on 30th March 2020.

The UK Government then decided to reduce lockdown measures commencing from 15th June 2020, therefore, GMCA Police and Crime Team reinstated direct physical custody visits week commencing 21st September 2020.

However, due to concerns raised at a national level, whereby some of the areas ceased with physical visits due to local risks becoming too high, because of local spikes of infections, local lockdowns and from custody staff testing positive from the virus. The Government introduced a new tier system and with Greater Manchester being at ‘high risk’, it was agreed, with GMP Custody Branch for us to re-commence with ICV telephone visits, with immediate effect on 13th October 2020.

On the 22nd of February 2021, the UK Government announced their ‘four-step’ roadmap, outlining a route back to ‘’normal life’’

**Proposal**

The first step of the Governments roadmap stipulates that the ‘stay at home’ rule will end on 29th March 2021, consequently the official lockdown restrictions will be reduced, as ICV’s are considered key workers it is proposed that direct physical custody visits will be re-introduced from week commencing 29th March 2021. This proposed decision has been taken in consultation with GMCA ICVs, GMP Custody Branch, GMP Health & Safety Team, the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) and advice from other schemes nationally.

The Volunteers Manager has undertaken individual ‘catch-ups’ with all the Police and Crime Team ICVs, to ascertain any changes in personal circumstances and to gauge their thoughts/concerns regarding returning to visiting GMP Custody Suites. Following these conversations three ICVs have expressed that they do not wish to return to their role, due to their own circumstances.

All ICVs have now received their first vaccination, one ICV has stated that they do not wish to return until the second dose has been administered. There is no requirement for ICVs to return to physical visits the decision remains with the individual visitor.

To safeguard the ICV’s welfare, and ensure COVID compliance the following steps have been applied:

* All ICVs (including 12 new recruits-awaiting induction training) have completed the GMCA self-assessment form, regarding any health issues as per Government guidelines, vaccinations administered and record of consent if they wish to return to undertaking physical visits.
* As above, the Volunteers Manager has spoken with all custody visitors to talk through any concerns and change in circumstances.
* At the GMCA ICV Support Meeting held on 10th March 2021, GMP Inspector Spruce, talked through the GMP Custody Processes and procedures, including PPE requirements, revised guidance, and risk assessments.

ICVs who have volunteered to re-commence direct physical visits are required to follow the revised procedure.

All ICVs have been informed to contact the Duty Inspector regarding any issues/concerns raised during the visit, in particular by the Custody Sergeant. ICVs must also inform the GMCA Volunteers Manager of any issues at the earliest opportunity.

**Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** There are various kinds of PPE, from simple face coverings, through to medical specification masks, to full protective clothing. ICVs should not, unless in very exceptional circumstances, place themselves in a situation where they would require either of the last two, both for their own safety and so as not to deplete supplies in the custody suites.

In summary, there is no requirement for ICVs to get within 2 metre proximity of detainees and therefore do not need the full PPE. They will require masks as a minimum, however goggles and apron are not necessary.

N.B PPE will be provided by GMP.

GMCA will continue to monitor Government Guidance to ensure the Health and Safety of all our visitors, custody staff and detainees are being met.

Please note that any ICVs that do not yet feel that they wish to undertake physical visits, at this time will not be penalised in any way.

ICVs participation

ICVs will initially need to complete the GMCA self-assessment form regarding any health issues as per Government guidelines and declaration if they wish to return to undertaking physical visits

Those wishing to undertake direct physical visits can do so with the following conditions:

* Any ICV wishing to participate does so entirely of their own choosing.
* Participating ICVs must undertake the GMCA Police and Crime Team coronavirus training (presentation) prior to returning to physical visits – sent out on 15.09.21 and adhere to the revised risk assessment.
* Any ICV who fits into the clinically extremely vulnerable (shielding) category **will not** **be allowed** to undertake physical visits. Any ICV who fits into the clinically vulnerable category must be aware of the additional risks.
* ICVs must read and understand the current and up to date NHS advice on COVID-19, which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Definitions and guidance for vulnerable groups can be found on the NHS Website at the link are below:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/whos-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/>

ICVs who have volunteered to commence direct physical visits should follow the revised procedure below:

* After completing the risk assessment, in conjunction with GMP Custody Branch and Health & Safety Unit, ICVs will re-continue to visit in pairs. This will be reflected in the rota undertaken by the Lead Visitor and the Volunteers Manager should be made aware.
* Each ICV is expected to carry out one visit per Custody Suite every week as is the current policy. Though additional visits may be requested for long stay detainees.
* Some Police Front Counters have been closed to the public, therefore ICVs should telephone their respective Custody Suite ahead their visit to be allowed access.
* Agree meeting point prior to the visit, and adhere to the 2 metre distancing rule. Contact custody to make them aware of your arrival, where you will be met and escorted through to the suite.
* ICVs visiting Custody Suite should be aware of potential additional risk re COVID-19, as per revised risk assessment
* ICVs should ensure that hands are sanitised before and after each visit, and please wear a face mask at all times, you may prefer to use your own, in any event GMP will provide you with the correct PPE
* ICVs should be reminded to sign in  (and out ) of the track and trace book that is held at each custody suite
* Continue/re-introduction of revised checklist (708e) that now incorporates COVID 19 related questions to the Custody Staff.
* Process will remain the same, however, each custody desk has now had plastic barrier erected, therefore please follow the recommended procedure, you will be guided by the Custody Sergeant
* On entering the detainee’s cell, 1st visitor will stand near the door, ask the relevant questions from the aide memoir (checklist 708e) and the 2nd visitor will write down the answers on their own checklist, adhering to the 2 meter distancing. Escorting Officer will also be present, stood within sight but not within ear shot.
* Any language book needs to be single use, therefore if you need to use language book, please make a photocopy of the relevant language page, which you dispose of immediately afterwards.
* As per current policy, please continue to phone in and out when you are in the process of conducting a physical visit, so there is an immediate record in case contact tracing may be necessary. Salford OOH’s Team during out of hours.
* Please complete your ICV report and ask the Custody Sergeant to scan and email the form and checklist to [volunteers.icv@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk](mailto:volunteers.icv@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk), this needs to be undertaken immediately in adherence to the GMP & GMCA Information sharing agreement. All forms and checklists to remain in custody.
* On leaving the custody suite, sanitise hands and once outside, discard all PPE
* Any issues/concerns please contact the GMCA Volunteers Manager.
* Custody will provide any necessary PPE , masks should be sufficient  but we can also provide gloves and aprons if that is what an individual ICV needed for their own peace of mind
* With regard to hand washing/ sanitising - there is hand sanitiser dotted everywhere (wall mounted and in bottles on desks)  so that is easy to access if they don't have their own. With regard to hand washing I would recommend that on arrival in custody they ask to use the hand washing facility in the detainee/ visitor toilet or in the finger print room  - this ensures they do not need to go behind the custody desk to access the staff toilet or kitchen

N.B if at any time you feel uncomfortable or wish to refrain from continuing the visit, please inform your fellow visitor and the Custody Sergeant. Please share your concerns with the GMCA Volunteers Manager

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**Additional guidance available to ICVs:**

Government guidance

https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance

NHS guidance

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

We also have the ongoing support tools below which can be accessed directly or through your manager:

* [Our health and wellbeing portal has support to keep you well at work](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/s5BRC3lzYsmAw62hDDetr?domain=greatermanchester-ca.us15.list-manage.com)
* Our Employee Assistance Programme:
  + [Videos](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/bcAqC48AWIJ0yMlTVh3Xt?domain=greatermanchester-ca.us15.list-manage.com)
  + [Main site](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/a3RhC58BAI0jo56i8wm-W?domain=greatermanchester-ca.us15.list-manage.com)
* [Silver Cloud](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/aVCXC66DYsoOEjyIBCe8f?domain=greatermanchester-ca.us15.list-manage.com)
* [Psychological first-aid PHE training course](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/n26kC76EDsmpv4Zh2rIkA?domain=greatermanchester-ca.us15.list-manage.com) for frontline staff and volunteers dealing with the COVID-19 response
* [Greater Manchester Health & Social Care Partnership resource](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/jctjC8qGXijvlDYCETQk1?domain=greatermanchester-ca.us15.list-manage.com)[s](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/EmkxC98J3Im3vL2hQgolV?domain=greatermanchester-ca.us15.list-manage.com)
* [The GMCA coronavirus toolkit](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/Y9xtC0gwAS2oKqmhpwieR?domain=greatermanchester-ca.us15.list-manage.com)
* [The Fire Fighters Charity](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/PN10Cg5R7cl0rOGFx4zNu?domain=greatermanchester-ca.us15.list-manage.com)
* [‘Every Mind Matters’](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/DPd4Cj2XAsj52KRCJiwd3?domain=greatermanchester-ca.us15.list-manage.com)
* [COVID-19 advice from the government](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/0EQQCk5Y6cnW785Tz5sco?domain=greatermanchester-ca.us15.list-manage.com)
* [Self-isolation advice](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/8Mf2ClOZ8Iony0XI4u2Od?domain=greatermanchester-ca.us15.list-manage.com)
* [Social distancing guidance](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/EVZ2Cmw17I5JZBWclV8JS?domain=greatermanchester-ca.us15.list-manage.com)
* [And good hand hygiene continues to be one of the most effective things we can all do to reduce the spread of the virus](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/wQDRCnZ2GFGOzAmTrUhe9?domain=greatermanchester-ca.us15.list-manage.com)