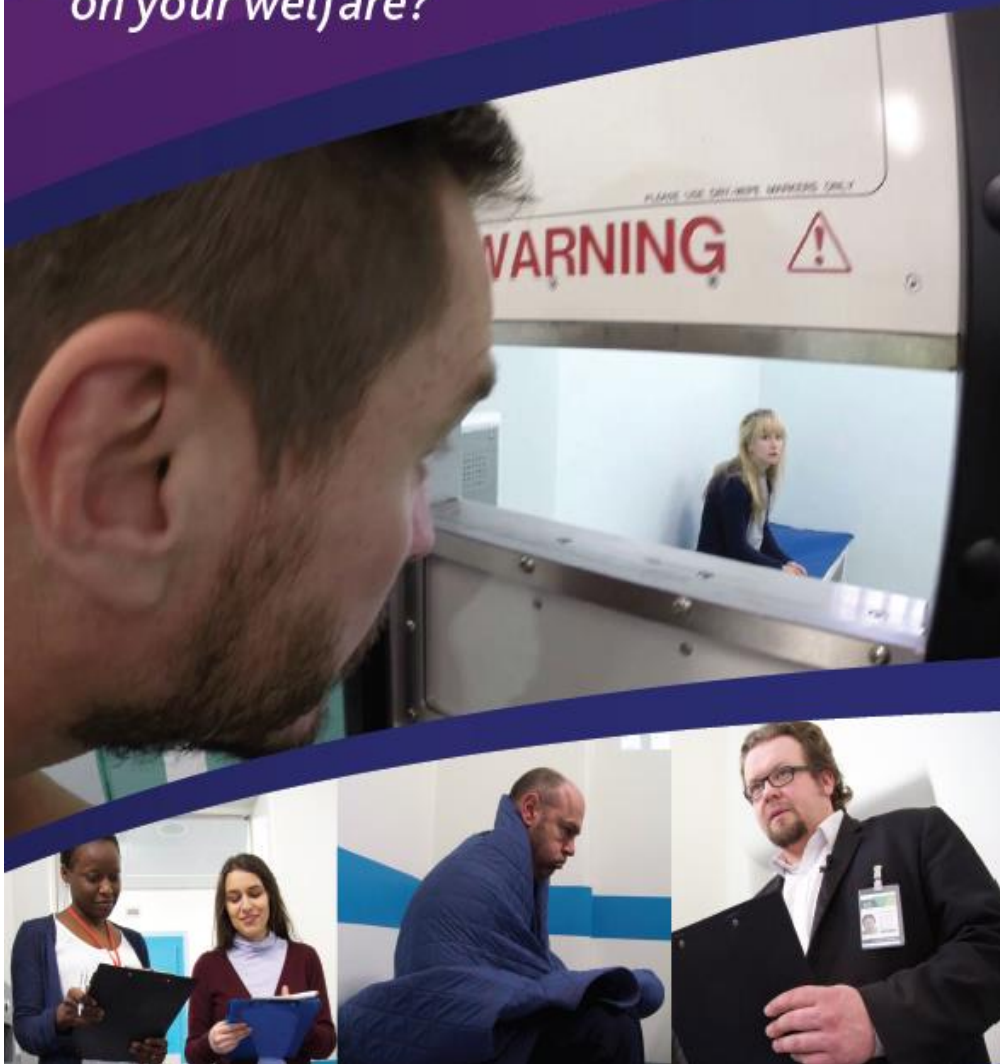


# INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING

*If this were you, wouldn't  
you want someone to check  
on your welfare?*



## Annual Report 2017-2018



**DORSET**  
POLICE & CRIME  
COMMISSIONER

# Foreword

Since the introduction of an Independent Custody Visiting Scheme in Dorset, our volunteers have visited thousands of detainees to check on their welfare and the conditions in which they are being held whilst being detained within police custody.

This report details the invaluable work that the Independent Custody Visitors have carried out across Dorset from 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018 and includes an overview of the year's visits, as well as more information about the Scheme in general.

The visits conducted over this year continue to confirm that custody suites within Dorset are a safe and caring environment for all detainees. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the custody officers and detention staff for their continued professionalism and dedication. Their role is not without challenges, but their treatment of detainees remains exemplary.

I am fortunate to be the Chair of the Independent Custody Visiting Association, which supports Commissioners, Scheme Managers and volunteers in the delivery of effective and efficient schemes.

Special thanks must also go to all Independent Custody Visitors, both past and present, who have carried out the role with a consistent enthusiasm and professionalism. It is their conscientiousness and commitment to the Scheme in Dorset that keeps it functioning at such a high level.



**Martyn Underhill**  
**Police and Crime Commissioner**

# Background

## **What is Independent Custody Visiting?**

Independent Custody Visiting is a national initiative, supported by the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA), whereby trained members of the public make random and unannounced visits to custody suites to check on the welfare of detainees and the conditions they are being held in. Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) will ensure the detainees have received their legal rights and entitlements and, with permission from the detainee, will review the notes kept on their treatment during detention. ICVs are independent of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the police, and will have no direct involvement in the criminal justice system. Police and Crime Commissioners have responsibility for running and maintaining Independent Custody Visiting Schemes in their force area.

Each week a pair of ICVs will visit each of the 24-hour suites. On completion of each visit they compile a report outlining any comments or concerns they may have. This report is sent to both the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office and Dorset Police. Serious complaints are investigated by the Professional Standards Department of Dorset Police; other matters which can be resolved at the time of the visit are recorded on the report. The findings of these reports are discussed at quarterly meetings attended by all ICVs, the Police and Crime Commissioner, the OPCC's Scheme Manager, the Assistant Chief Constable, Dorset Police's Head of Criminal Justice and the Custody Liaison Officer.

## **Why is Independent Custody Visiting important?**

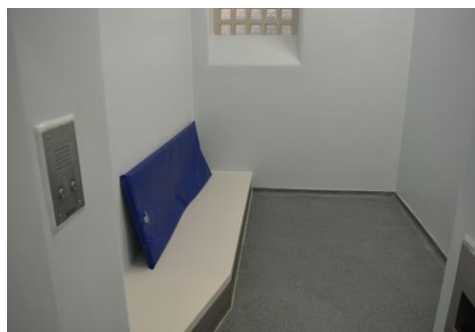
Independent Custody Visiting provides protection to detainees and the police, and reassurance to the wider community. Volunteers from Independent Custody Visiting Schemes across the UK independently check on the welfare of detainees who may be feeling vulnerable or confused, providing independent scrutiny of their treatment and the conditions in which they are being held.

Independent Custody Visiting allows the police to demonstrate their commitment to transparency and provides public reassurance that policing in their area is fair and in accordance with statutory legislation and guidance.

# Dorset Custody

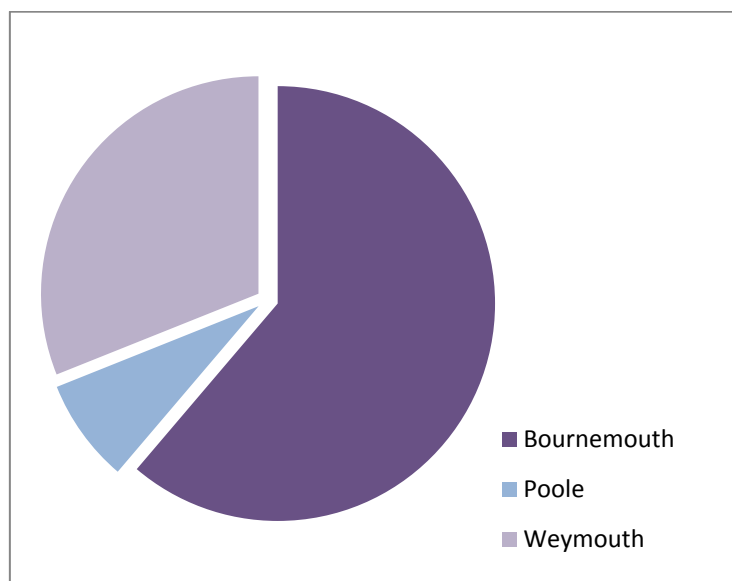
## Estates

Dorset Police operates two 24-hour suites, one in Bournemouth and the other in Weymouth. A third custody suite is available in Poole. However, although this suite is always ready to be used, it is generally non-operational. Poole is usually opened when, due to operational need or other issues, such as building or maintenance work, one of the two suites is closed and detainees are transferred to Poole Custody. Poole may also be opened and operated as a third suite during periods of high demand. The Scheme Manager is always informed of any movement away from the usual custody suites and this information is passed to ICVs as soon as possible. When Poole is open ICVs are also scheduled to visit this suite.

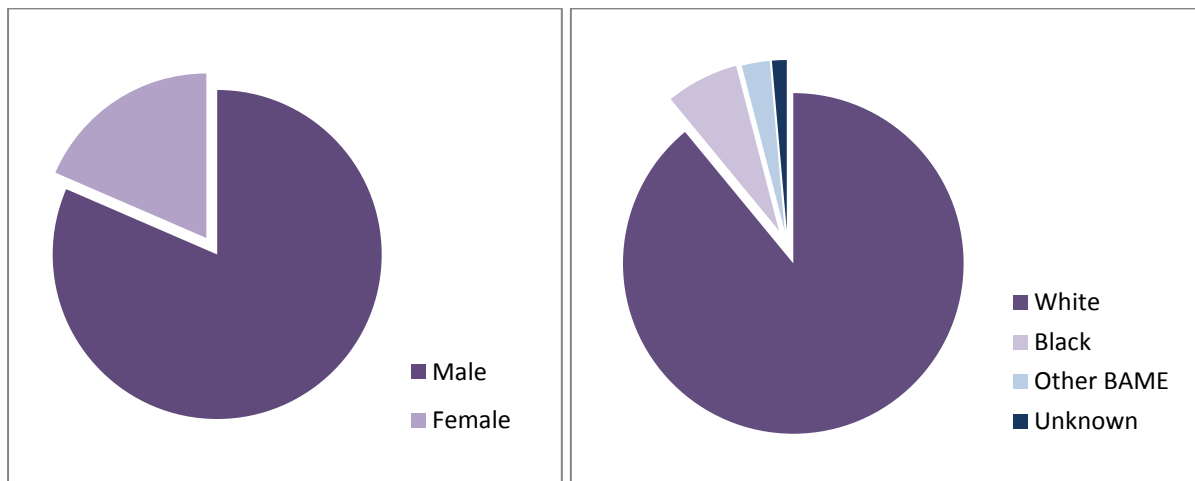


## Detainees

Throughout 2017-18 approximately 7,000 people were detained across the three custody suites in Dorset. Bournemouth is the busiest of the three suites with 61% of detainees being held here. A breakdown by area can be seen below.



Males account for 81% of all detainees and Females account for 19%. 90% of people detained within Dorset are White, 6% are Black, 3% are all other BAME groups and 1% are from unknown ethnic backgrounds.



### Highlights

The custody team within Dorset manage complex detainees on a daily basis, making risk based decisions throughout each detention. Below are a small selection of some of the comments that have been received.

Following an attempted murder the investigator sent praise to the custody team on duty for the professional way they worked despite being under significant pressure. The Officer thanked the custody staff for all their professionalism in managing difficult detainees, as well as the other demands that were placed on them during a very busy shift.

The snow in March 2018 also posed significant challenges to Dorset Police. During this time both custody suites in Dorset remained operational and staff went to considerable effort to ensure they were able to support the safe detention of those kept within the custody suites.

A mother wrote to praise staff following the arrest of her autistic son, who was detained overnight. She stated that all officers were “kind, respectful and reassuring... communication was excellent. Everything was clearly explained”. When her son was detained in his cell overnight an officer spent time with him so that the door did not have to be locked all the time, for which he was very grateful.

Following an exit risk assessment, a detainee praised the Criminal Justice Liaison and Diversion staff for keeping him safe whilst in custody, and for the onward signposting to support networks following his release.

# Dorset ICVs

## Visiting Information

On average ICVs within Dorset visit each open suite once per week. Visitors always visit in pairs. Visits are unannounced and visitors must be admitted to the custody facility immediately on their arrival.

During visits, detainees are given the opportunity to discuss with the visitors their treatment whilst in custody. Visitors will check that detainees have been informed of their legal rights and that they understand them.

Visitors will also check that:

- Cells and toilets have been maintained
- Reasonable temperatures are maintained within the cells and suite
- Any medical attention or medication required has been provided
- Any visible injuries have been explained
- Washing facilities and access to fresh clothing has been provided
- The custody facility, food preparation areas and bedding are in a clean, tidy and hygienic condition
- The detainee is satisfied with their treatment in custody
- A reasonable period of time to rest has been given if detained overnight
- With the consent of the detainee, visitors check the custody log to confirm the detainee's account of their detention.

Visitors raise any matters that require immediate attention with the Custody Sergeant at the time of the visit and a report is completed as a record of each visit. Copies of the report are provided to the Custody Manager for Dorset Police and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. Any queries arising from the reports are discussed and feedback provided at the Panel meeting, or before if the situation requires.

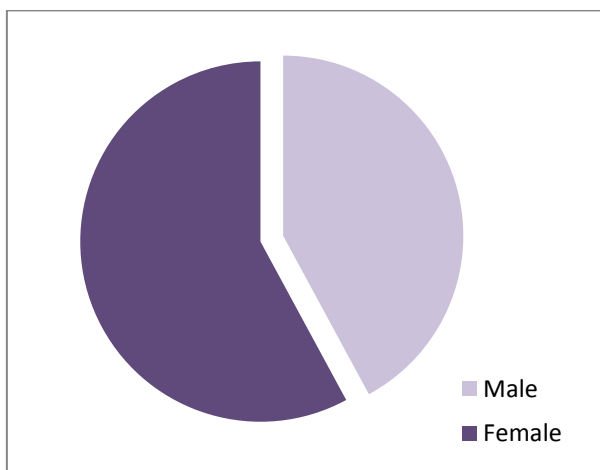
The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner hosts two training days per year and also includes training as part of panel meetings. In 2017-18 the following areas were covered:

- Induction (new starters only)
- Refresher
- Mental Health
- Equality and Diversity
- ICVA Children's Concordat Bitesize Training
- Use of Force Demonstration
- TACT ( Terrorism Act)

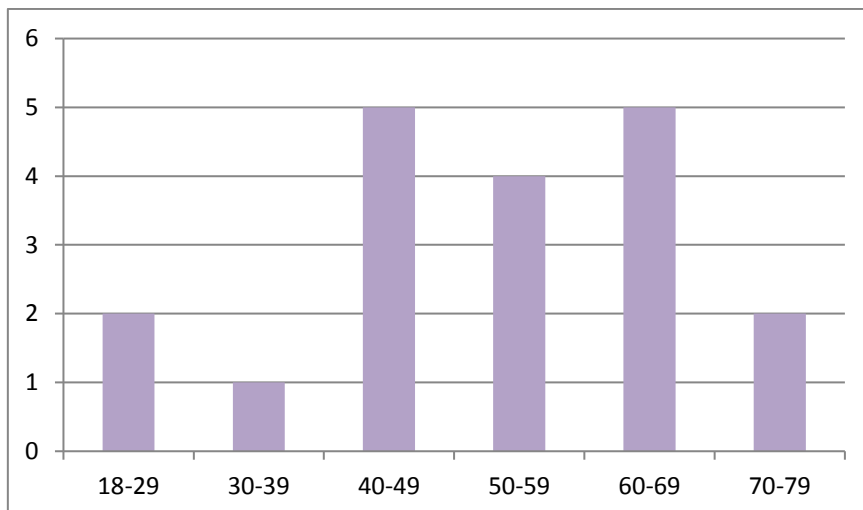
### Volunteer Information

A recruitment campaign was held in 2017 which generated a great deal of public interest, resulting in the appointment of six new ICVs. Start dates for new ICVs were staggered to provide each trainee with sufficient visits to aid their learning and ensure that accredited ICVs were able to continue being allocated visits.

At the close of the financial year 2017-18 there was a total of 19 ICVs within Dorset, eight male and 11 female.

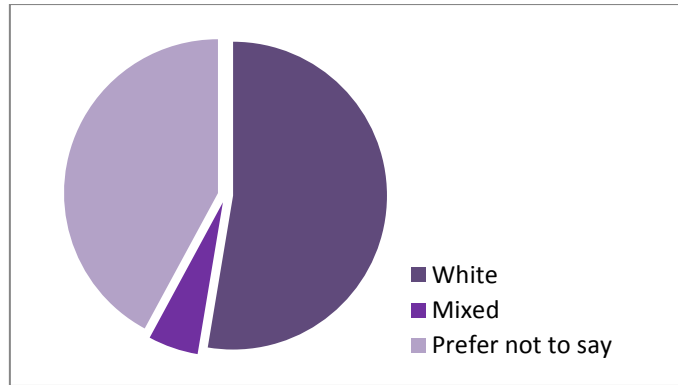


The average age of ICVs in Dorset is 51. A detailed breakdown on the age of ICVs is outlined in the bar chart below.



Targeted advertising to recruit younger people and reduce the average age of ICVs has taken place and the Scheme Manager has been proactively working with Bournemouth University on this.

The average length of service, rounded to the nearest year, is three years and the longest serving ICV has been with the Scheme for 9 years.



53% of ICVs within Dorset are White, 5% are from Mixed Race backgrounds and the remaining 42% opted out of providing this data.

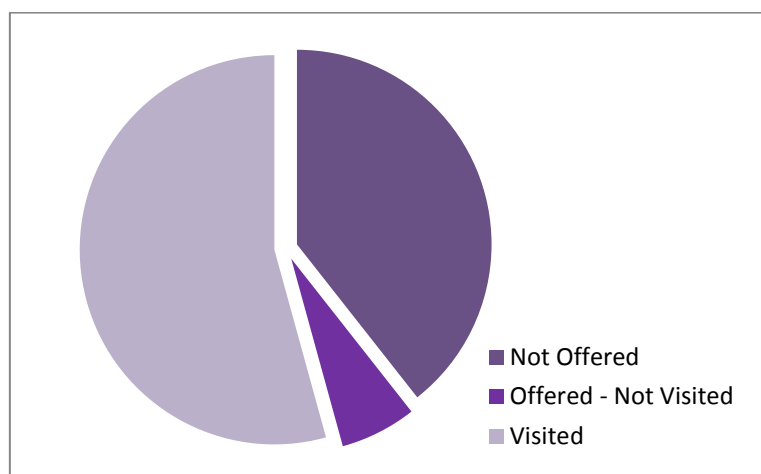
## Visit Statistics

During the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018, a total of 102 visits were made to Dorset Custody Suites, 48 to Weymouth, 47 to Bournemouth and 7 to Poole.

	Weymouth	Bournemouth	Poole	Total
Number of Visits	48	47	7	102

During the 102 visits made, a total of 517 detainees were offered a visit, and 463 detainees accepted and were spoken to. Not all detainees are visited by ICVs, they have the right to privacy and are not obliged to speak with visitors if they do not wish to. The detainee may also be asleep, being interviewed or processed. Over the last year 54% of all those detained at the time of a visit were interviewed by ICVs.

	Held	Offered	Visited
Number of Detainees	853	517	463





Any delays in gaining entry to the custody suites can compromise the credibility of the Scheme. Detailed below is the number of occasions delays have been experienced. Only one visit was delayed this year with it taking six minutes for ICVs to gain access to the suite. An acceptable reason for the delay was provided at the time and an update was provided at the relevant panel meeting.

Waiting Time	Number of Visits	%
Within 5 Mins	101	99%
Within 5-10 Mins	1	1%
Within 10-15 Mins	0	0%
Over 15 Mins	0	0%

The days of the week and times of the visits undertaken are shown below. In Dorset we continue to maintain a spread across the various days and times. Fewer visits are conducted between the hours of 9pm-6am as during these hours visitors may not be able to speak with many detainees as they will be asleep. However visits during this time do provide the opportunity to conduct a thorough review of the conditions of the suite.

Day of the Week	Number of Visits
Monday	16
Tuesday	13
Wednesday	21
Thursday	10
Friday	16
Saturday	14
Sunday	12

Time of Visit	Number of Visits
00:01 - 06:00	7
06:01 - 09:00	5
09:01 - 12:00	25
12:01 - 15:00	12
15:01 - 18:00	10
18:01 - 21:00	30
21:01 - 00:00	10

## Key Developments

Changes have been made to the process of recruitment. This year in Dorset we hosted a live web chat to afford those interest in the Scheme the opportunity to direct questions to the OPCC and/or existing ICVs from within their own homes. This replaced the open event, usually held at Poole Custody Suite, and generated a great deal of interest from the public, with many relevant questions being asked. In addition to this all applicants were invited to an information evening, at Poole Custody Suite, allowing them the opportunity to see inside a custody suite and to receive a presentation containing important information about the role.

This year Bestival was held at Lulworth, Dorset for the first time. This was a heavily policed event and it was believed that this would result in an increased demand on custody. As such Dorset Police took the decision to open Poole Custody Suite in addition to Weymouth and Bournemouth in order to deal with the increased demand. ICVs visited all three suites over this period.



ICVs often use language questionnaires to assist in interviewing detainees who do not speak English. This year we were able to include additional languages within this. The languages now available to Dorset ICVs are: Albanian, Arabic, Chinese, Czech, Farsi, Hungarian, Kurdish Sorani, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Slovak, Spanish, Swedish and Urdu.

## Key Issues

Key issues highlighted in 2017-2018 and the actions taken on these issues were as follows.

Language Questionnaires – ICVs noted that the way in which the language questionnaires were used, whereby detainees placed small stickers on/next to their answers, was not fit for purpose. ICVs asked if this process could be reviewed and an alternative option found. The OPCC discussed this with the Force and it was agreed that ICVs would be able to use dry wipe pens to mark the detainees answer, however it is the ICVs responsibility to ensure no pen is left in a cell.

Blankets/Temperature – During the colder months there was a dramatic increase in Detainees claiming to be cold within the custody suite. In addition to this there appeared to be a shortage of blanket over the Christmas period. This was fed back to the force. It was highlighted that the blanket shortage was due to an issue with cleaners over the bank holidays. Additional blankets were purchased to prevent this in the future. The cold temperatures recorded were deemed to be a result of the

structure of the building. Interim measures have been put in place to avoid colder cells during the winter and building services are currently looking for a longer term solution to the problem. ICVs are continuing to monitor the progress on this matter.



Provision of Appropriate Adults – ICVs noted several incidents where the provision of an appropriate adult appeared to be significantly delayed. ICVs are continuing to monitor this issue and report back any issues. Dorset Police are providing updates on a case by case basis.

## **TACT (Terrorism Act)**

TACT detainees are those who have been arrested under the Terrorism Act (2000) and can be held in detention for up to 14 days pre charge. Under the revised codes of practice for custody visiting specially trained ICVs can visit TACT detainees. TACT detainees should be visited within the first 24 hours of their detention and continue to be visited daily until they are either charged or released.

The Independent Reviewer of Terrorist Legislation (IRTL) has a responsibility to Parliament on the operation of counter-terrorism law in the UK and all ICV reports relating to TACT detainees go through the IRTL.

TACT visitors must be 18 or over, live or work within the police area, have been resident in the UK for a minimum of three years and have completed a minimum of 18 months as an ICV. TACT visitors are also subject to a higher level of vetting.

In 2017-18 the number of TACT detainees increased dramatically across the UK as such the decision was made to train six of our existing ICVs on TACT visiting. For the year ahead we plan to train additional ICVs on TACT visiting to allow for greater resilience in this area.

Since training ICVs on TACT visiting no TACT visits have been undertaken within Dorset.

## The Future

At the close of 2017-18 there was a lengthy waiting list of people interested in joining the Scheme. A 'light' recruitment is being held to allow those on the waiting list the opportunity to apply. The 'light' recruitment will not involve any additional advertising. A full recruitment will also be held later in the year with the normal process being undertaken.

ICVA have released a Quality Assurance Framework (QAF). The QAF is a set of guidelines set by ICVA by which the performance of local schemes will be measured. The Dorset Scheme is taking part in the ICVA QAF and is looking to work with ICVs to ensure a high standard is achieved.

## Further Information

Expressions of interest from members of the public to become Independent Custody Visitors are always welcome and the Commissioner's office is keen to recruit volunteers from a wide spectrum of society to reflect the diverse communities in Dorset.

Volunteers must be 18 years of age, independent of the police and willing to carry out the role objectively and impartially.

Enquiries from members of the public interested in the Scheme should be directed to [pcc@dorset.pnn.police.uk](mailto:pcc@dorset.pnn.police.uk)

### Useful Links

Dorset OPCC

<https://www.dorset.pcc.police.uk/>

Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA)

[www.icva.org.uk](http://www.icva.org.uk)

Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation

<https://terrorismlegislationreviewer.independent.gov.uk/>

National Preventative Mechanism

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