

Custody scrutiny project inspires national pilot

A new monitoring system developed in Derbyshire to protect the welfare of vulnerable people in police custody is to become the focus of a wider pilot raising standards of scrutiny nationwide.

Derbyshire Police and Crime Commissioner Hardyal Dhindsa has expanded the role of the County's Independent Custody Visitor (ICV) Scheme, launching a new service dedicated to assessing the experience of vulnerable people in police custody including those who have mental health conditions and young people.

Derbyshire achieved a coveted 'Platinum' standard in the Independent Custody Visiting Association's (ICVA) Quality Assurance Awards, and this new model of oversight is part of a move to develop a more holistic approach to inspection processes and sees volunteers reviewing complete custody records against a new range of vulnerability criteria.

These include checking whether individuals have been detained according to their needs and in line with PACE (Police and Criminal Evidence Act) regulations, whether they received access to an Appropriate Adult and how long this took, whether they received their rights and entitlements and whether their dietary and religious needs were catered for. Such provisions are applicable to all detainees, but are particularly important for people in more vulnerable circumstances.

The Derbyshire model, which was introduced last April, has been so successful that the ICVA has pulled together six other County's ICV schemes as part of the Independent Custody Observers Pilot (ICOP) to introduce the model and roll-out a similar style of visits in the future.

Derbyshire is fully supporting the move, providing training and advice to deliver the new-style custody record reviews. Its aim is to inspire national change towards a more holistic monitoring system.

The ICOP will be independently evaluated to assess outcomes.

Derbyshire Police and Crime Commissioner Hardyal Dhindsa said: "I'm delighted the ICVA has recognised the benefits of this model and has developed a national pilot which has the potential to influence change across England and Wales. Our success has already received ministerial praise from the former Minister of State for the Home Office, Nick Hurd.

"We are now looking at expanding our project further, changing our style of visits to be more holistic and to incorporate other areas of custody including risk assessments and the booking in of detainees."