



# INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITOR SCHEME ANNUAL REPORT



**John Campion**  
**Police and Crime Commissioner**  
**West Mercia**

# FOREWORD

I am committed to ensuring that police custody is a safe place. Those who are detained should be treated with respect and their individual needs are met.

I am proud that in West Mercia we have a strong Independent Custody Visitor scheme and I am proud to support such an important volunteer led activity. Whilst it is my statutory duty to deliver a scheme, ensuring it is robust and efficient is key.

The work these individuals do is crucial to the safety of those held in custody and for providing transparency and confidence in policing.

An inspection, carried out in 2022 by HMCIFRS, highlighted some serious areas of concern around legal rights, safety and welfare in West Mercia Police custody. I reinforced my commitment to not only see that the force made significant improvements but that my ICV scheme continued to provide important scrutiny.

I am continually grateful for the valuable contribution these volunteers give to ensure the welfare of detainees is of a high standard, which in turn supports me in delivering my Safer West Mercia Plan.



**John Campion**

Police and Crime Commissioner



# INTRODUCTION

This report sets out the crucial work that West Mercia Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) have carried out during 2022-2023, helping to ensure that custody suites across the West Mercia police force area are a safe and dignified environment for detainees.

Custody visiting was set up in response to the Scarman Report of 1981 which followed civil disorders. The scheme gave members of the public from the local area the ability to inspect custody facilities and to make sure detainees are treated properly and in accordance with the law.

ICVs are appointed and overseen by the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner and are totally independent of the police force. They carry out an important and highly valued role that helps strengthen police accountability.

ICVs are volunteers drawn from all walks of life, and they provide an independent check on the welfare of people who are detained in police custody. They do this by making unannounced visits in pairs to police custody facilities throughout the force area, and reporting their findings. ICVs play an important part in the PCC holding the force to account.

The West Mercia Independent Custody Visiting Scheme has four ICV panels across the force area. Each panel is responsible for organising and undertaking the visits to the custody suites local to the panel. South Worcestershire panel visits the Worcester suite; Herefordshire panel visits the Hereford suite; North Worcestershire panel visits the Kidderminster; Shropshire panel visits the Shrewsbury and Telford suites.



# THE CUSTODY ESTATE

Worcester | 22 Cells



Shrewsbury | 16 Cells



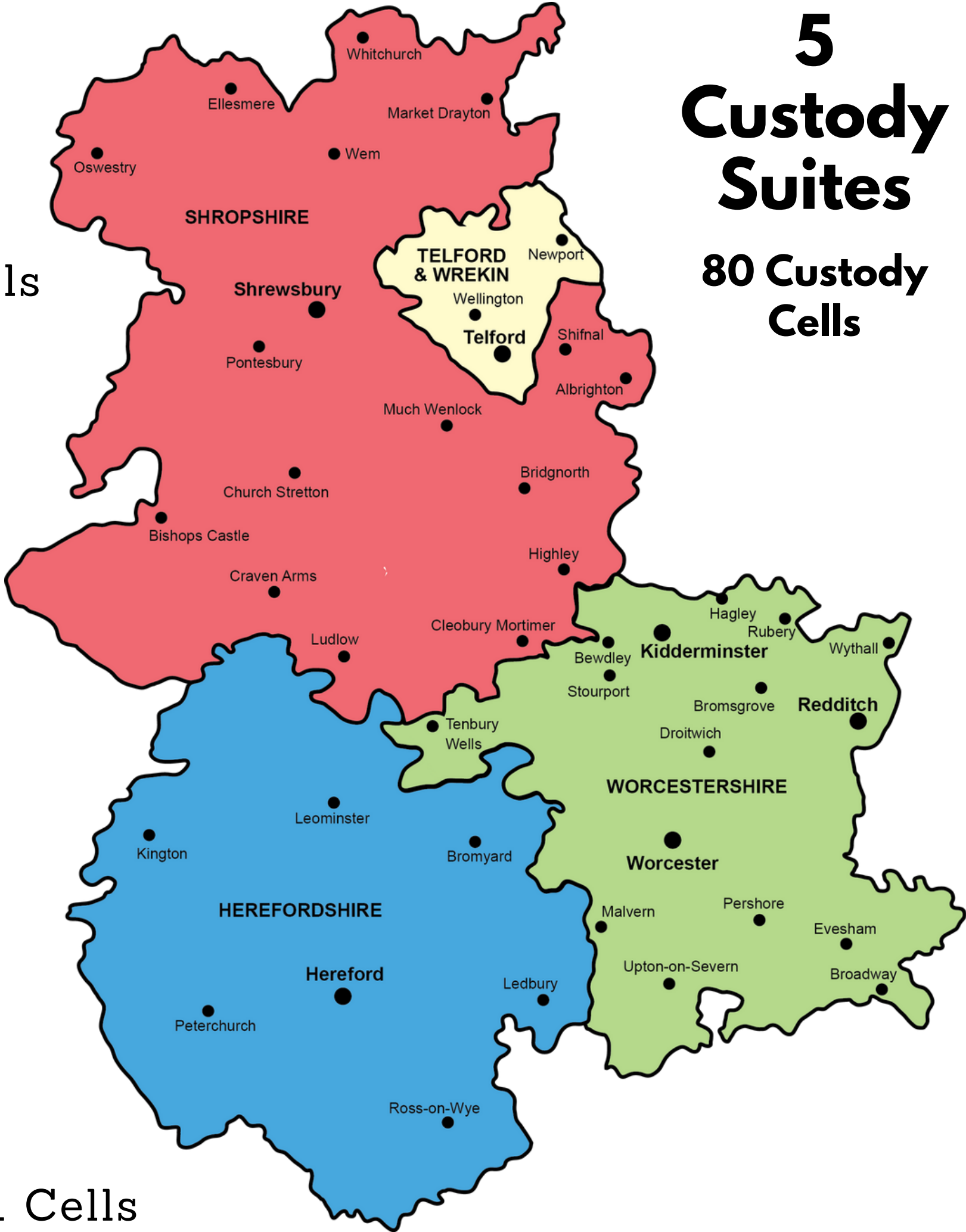
Hereford | 16 Cells

Telford | 15 Cells



Kidderminster | 11 Cells

**5**  
**Custody**  
**Suites**  
**80 Custody**  
**Cells**





# CUSTODY VISITORS

There are currently a total of 36 volunteers in the scheme, covering the 5 Custody suites. Volunteers work in pairs to conduct unannounced visits to custody each week. The average age of ICVs in the Scheme is 62 with the youngest visitor aged 22 and the eldest visitor aged 80. There are several ICVs who have committed between 10 and 30 years of service within the scheme.

The office of the PCC continues to review recruitment process to ensure there are sufficient volunteers across the custody suites, and to ensure the volunteers in the scheme are more representative of the communities in West Mercia.



Average age  
**62**

**36**  
ICVs



Over  
**200**  
years service

# ANNUAL THROUGHPUT OF DETAINED PERSONS

1 April 2022 - 31 March 2023

WORCESTER

3,523

KIDDERMINSTER

2,811

SHREWSBURY

2,647



TELFORD

3,705

HEREFORD

2,671



# CUSTODY VISITOR DATA

The following data is for the period 1 April 2022 - 31 March 2023.

NUMBER OF ICV  
VISITS

229

TOTAL NUMBER OF  
DETAINEES IN CUSTODY AT  
THE TIME OF AN ICV VISIT

757

NUMBER OF  
DETAINEES VISITED

360

DETAINEES VISITED

47%



# DETAINEES NOT SEEN

The following data is for the period 1 July 2022  
- 31 March 2023.

ICV visits take place weekly at each of the 5 Custody Suites. During the reporting period, 51% of detainees in custody could not be seen. On very rare occasions visits may not be practicable due to ICV availability last minute.

Detainees could be unavailable for a visit with an ICV for a number of reasons including, being asleep or in a period of rest, in interview or with a health care practitioner.

Custody staff have on occasion, advised ICVs not to visit detainees where there may be risk of harm. Detainees can also refuse visits from ICVs,



Refused 8%

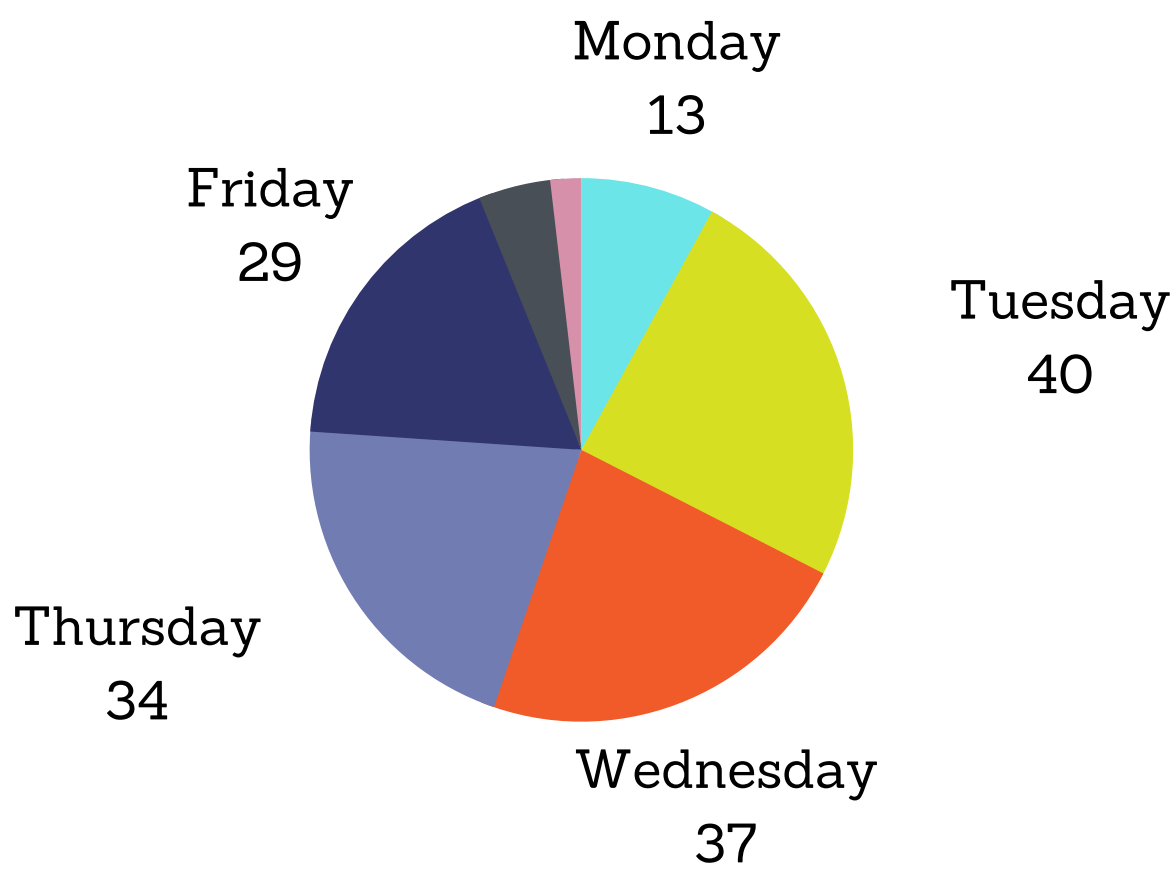
Unavailable 43%



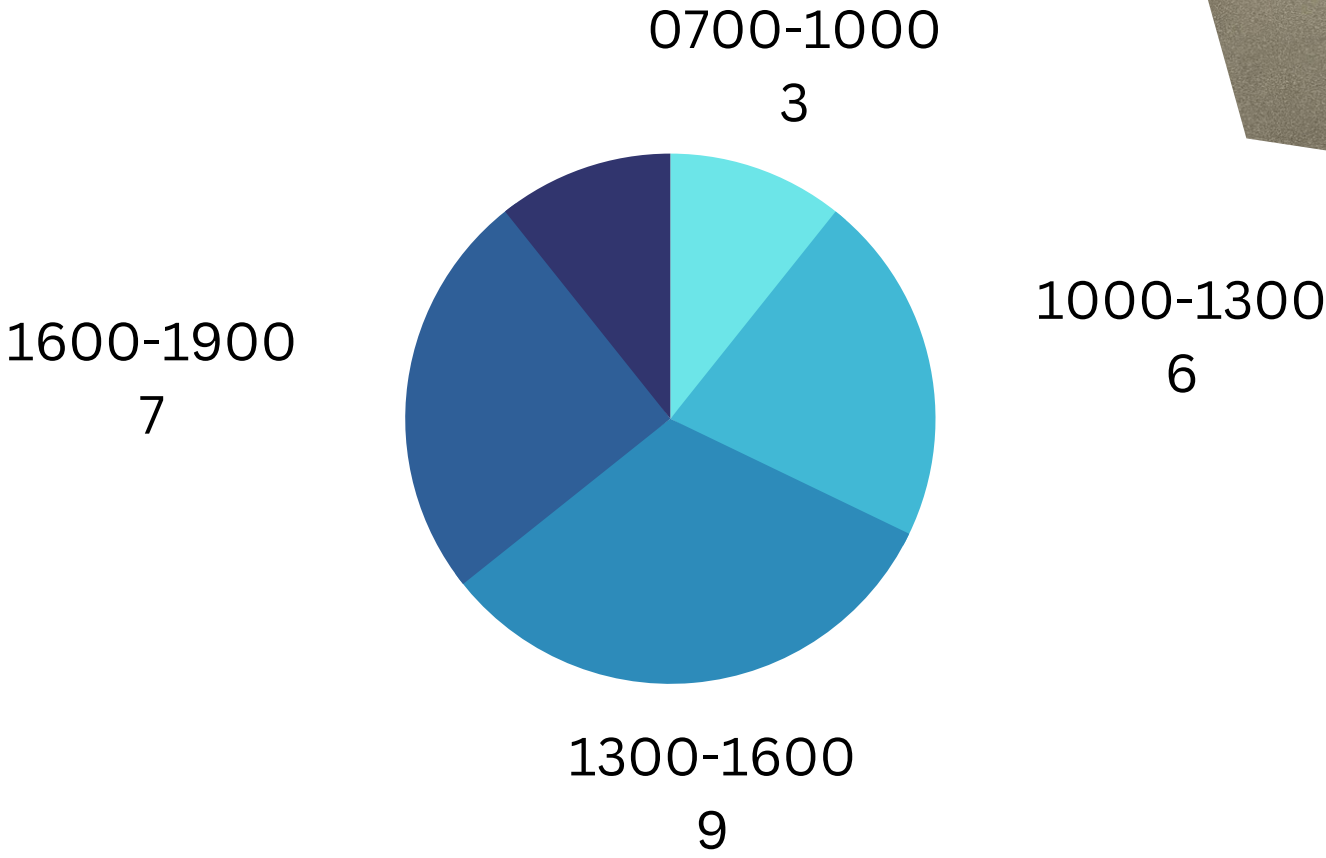
The following data is for the period 1 July 2022 - 31 March 2023. Please note, data is only available from July due to the introduction of a new reporting form to improve data capture.



**DAYS VISITS TOOK PLACE**



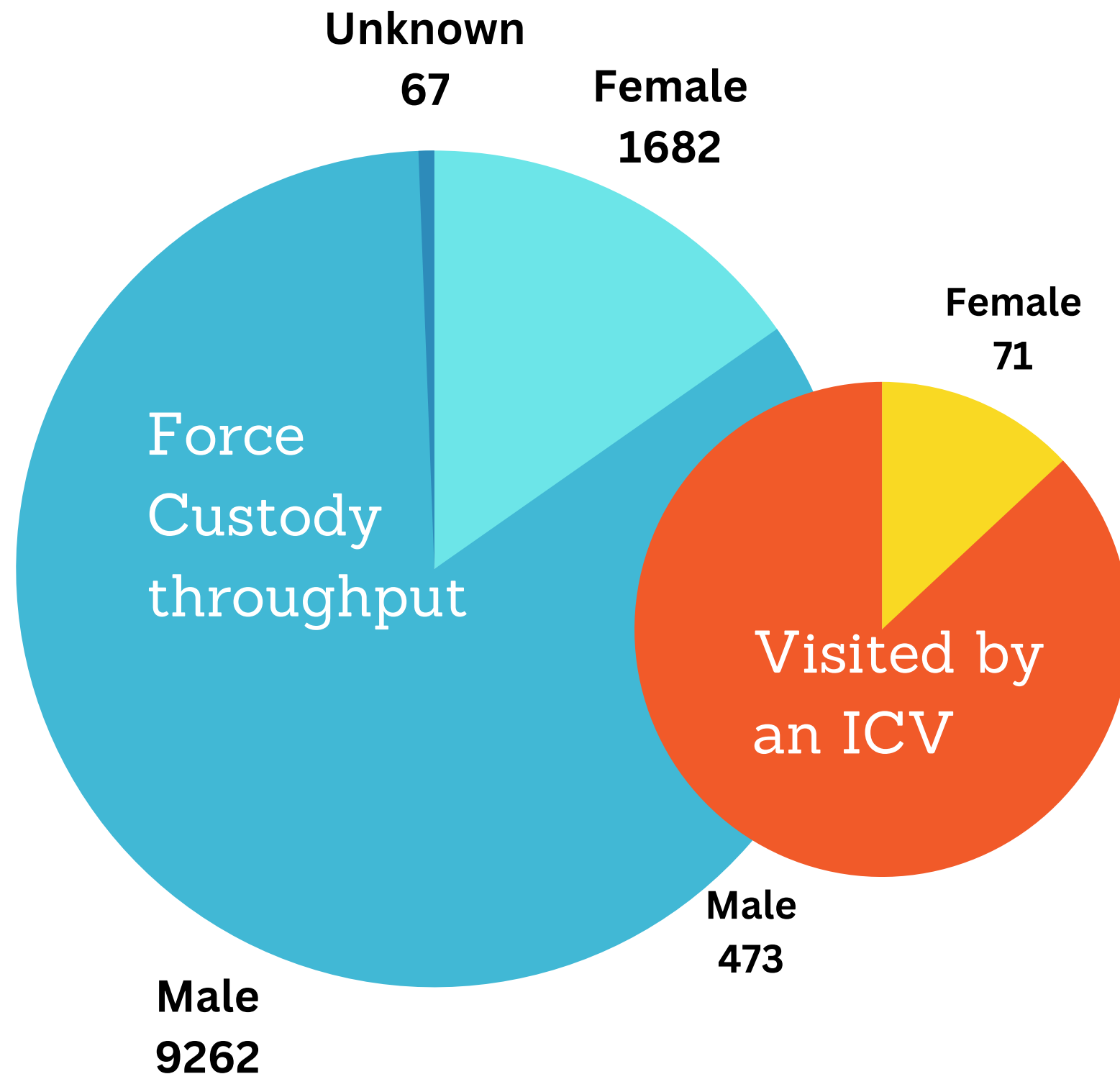
**TIMES VISITS TOOK PLACE**



Rotas are produced to ensure visits are undertaken on different days of the week and at different times to get an accurate understanding of the experience of detainees.

# GENDER

The following data is for the period 1 July 2022  
- 31 March 2023.



15% of detainees visited by an ICV were female; this is representative of the total female population in custody.



# ETHNICITY

The following data is for the period 1 July 2022  
- 31 March 2023.



Force custody ethnicity data →

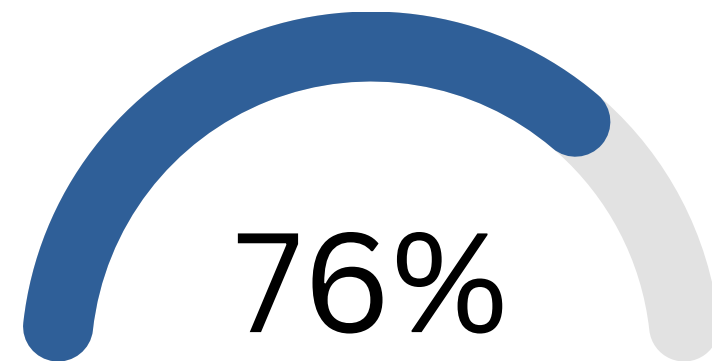
ICVs were able to visit 72% of Non-English speaking Detainees who were in custody at the time of a visit. In most cases ICVs were able to access translation sheets to conduct visits.

|  | Total |
|--|-------|
| Any Other Asian Background                   | 66    |
| Black, Black British or Caribbean Background | 80    |
| Any Other Ethnic Group                       | 8     |
| Mixed or Multiple Background                 | 29    |
| White Background                             | 130   |
| Arab   | 5     |
| Bangladeshi                                  | 1     |
| Black African                                | 21    |
| Black Caribbean                              | 5     |
| Chinese                                      | 5     |
| Gypsy or Irish Traveller                     | 1     |
| Indian                                       | 20    |
| Not Stated                                   | 67    |
| Pakistani                                    | 37    |
| Asian  | 4     |
| White And Black African                      | 6     |
| White And Black Caribbean                    | 12    |
| White British                                | 1715  |
| White Irish                                  | 2     |

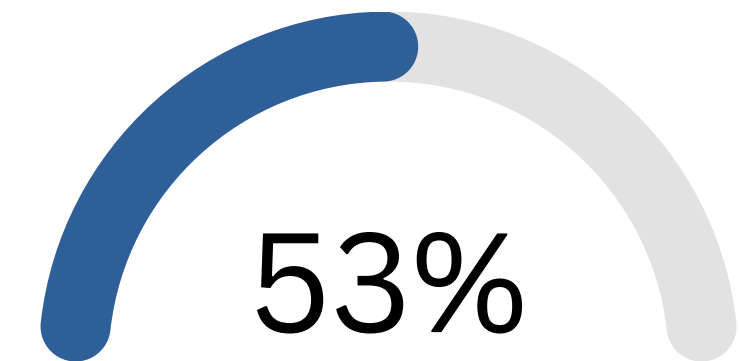
# VULNERABILITY

The following data is for the period 1 July 2022  
- 31 March 2023.

Detainees can be deemed vulnerable for a number of reasons including being under the age of 18, having a mental health disability and being a high risk of harm to themselves. Their vulnerability does not always make it necessary for an appropriate adult to act on their behalf.



of detainees, deemed vulnerable at the time of an ICV visit, were appointed an appropriate adult.



of the children and young people in custody, accepted an ICV visit.



# ISSUES RAISED

ICVs check on the conditions in which detainees are kept, particularly regarding their health, well-being, rights and entitlements, with reference to PACE Codes of Practice Code C. Where appropriate, ICVs escalate any immediate concerns with the Custody staff. Most ICV Visit Reports include positive feedback in respect of the Custody staff and raise no issues or problems from detainees or the custody environment.

Below, you can see the top 3 issues raised by ICVs for April 2022 - March 2023 and how they were resolved:

- ICVs visited Kidderminster Custody and frequently reported the lights in the exercise yard were not working. The issue was raised with the Estates team and has subsequently been resolved.
- On several occasions ICVs visiting Telford Custody suite raised concerns about the medical bench which was escalated to my office and was replaced.
- ICVs reported concerns surrounding female detainees who were unaware they could request access to a female member of staff whilst in custody. This was escalated to the Force Inspector who sent guidance to all Custody Staff on the process for female detainees.



# ESTATE INSPECTIONS

The HMICFRS custody inspection published in 2022 showed that improvements need to be made to the custody estate. The full report can be found below

<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/report-on-an-unannounced-inspection-visit-to-police-custody-suites-in-west-mercias.pdf>

The ICV scheme coordinator and the Estates team are working together to not only address the recommendations from the inspection, but also any other concerns raised via the scheme. This ensures the ICVs are kept up-to-date on repair works and Estates' works in custody, and enables them to monitor progress.





# TRAINING AND MEMBERSHIP

In the summer of 2022, the first annual training day of the ICV Scheme launched. The agenda included inputs from Sherry Ralph, Chief Executive from the Independent Custody Visiting Association and guest speakers from West Mercia Police. Alongside training inputs, certificates were presented to several ICVs, recognising their long service to the scheme. Due to its success, plans are underway for the second ICV Training day in July 2023.





# ANIMAL WELFARE SCHEME

The Animal Welfare Visitor scheme in West Mercia was established in 2021 in partnership with the PCC Office, West Mercia Police and the Dogs Trust. The Scheme aims to support delivery of the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) strategy to improve public confidence in police dog training methods.

In West Mercia there are currently 4 trained volunteers (Animal Welfare Visitors, AWW) who make unannounced visits to Police kennels and training events. These visits are conducted once a month to check on the welfare of the dogs, as well as ensuring the kennel environment and handler's vehicles are correctly maintained. Since the scheme began, no concerns have been raised in regards to welfare.

Feedback in regards to landscaping and the estate were shared with the Estates team and resulted in grounds work being carried out in the area adjacent to the kennels.

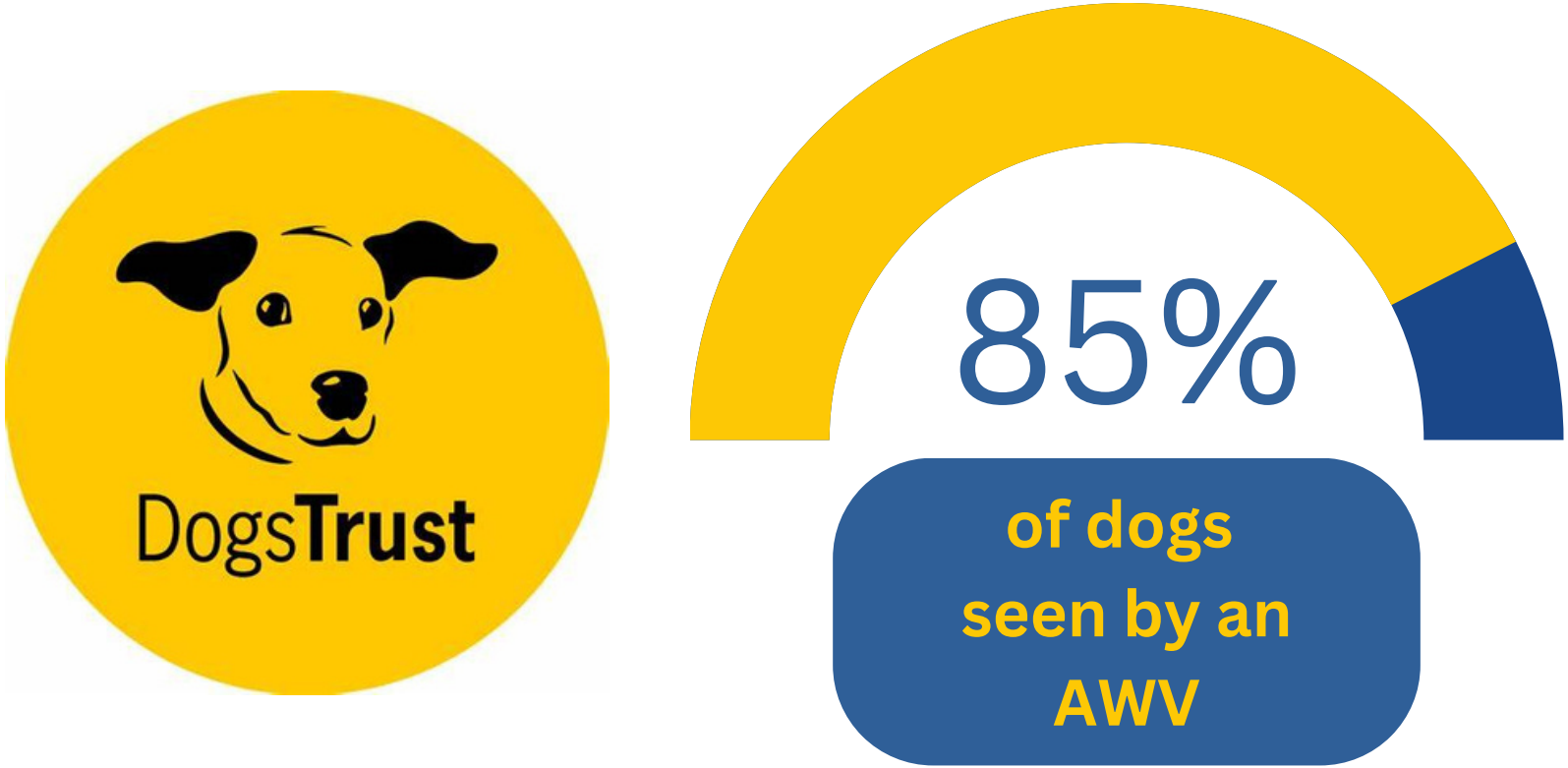




# ANIMAL WELFARE SCHEME

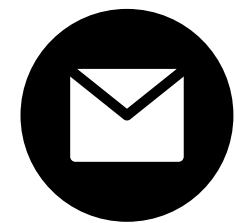
The following data is for the period 1 April 2022 - 31 March 2023

|              |
|--------------|
| 49           |
| Operational  |
| 4            |
| Non-Licenced |
| 8            |
| Other Agency |
| 18           |
| Retired      |





For more information on the ICV Scheme  
please find us at:



E-mail: [opcc@westmerciamerica.police.uk](mailto:opcc@westmerciamerica.police.uk)



Phone: 01905 331656



Website: [www.westmerciamerica-pcc.gov.uk](http://www.westmerciamerica-pcc.gov.uk)



@WestMerciaPCC



If you are interested in becoming an  
Independent Custody Volunteer,  
please email:  
[Jenny.humphries@westmerciamerica.police.uk](mailto:Jenny.humphries@westmerciamerica.police.uk)