

1981

Riots in Brixton
11 April 1981 – Lord Scarman commissioned to hold an inquiry into the riots. As a result, Lord Scarman suggests the concept of Custody Visiting (or Lay Visiting as it was known). Home Office Ministers subsequently approve a non-statutory Custody Visiting Scheme.



1983

The Home Office produce provisional guidance (“Lay Visitors to Police Stations: Guidelines (Provincial Forces)”) and pilot schemes are set up in Lambeth and in six provincial police authority areas (Cheshire, Greater Manchester, Humberside, Leicestershire, South Yorkshire and West Midlands).

1984

A new code for police behaviour is put forward in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE). PACE sets out the way in which police officers must carry out their roles and states specific codes of practice for police procedures. It also establishes the rights of people who are detained by the police for a suspected crime or offence. PACE is a reference for Lay Visitors as they carry out inspections of police custody suites.



1986

Home Office Circular 12/86 is issued. This commends the setting up of Lay Visiting Schemes in all force areas and incorporates revised guidance.

1991

Following extensive consultation with the Metropolitan Police, Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), the Local Authority Associations and Lay Visitors, the Home Office issues detailed revised guidance to London Lay Visitors.

1992

Provincial Police Authorities are provided with more detailed revised guidance by way of Home Office Circular 4/92. This Circular states: “The purpose of these visiting arrangements is to enable members of the local community to observe, comment and report on the conditions under which persons are detained at police stations and the operation in practice of the statutory and other rules governing their welfare, with a view to securing greater public understanding and confidence in these matters.”
A pilot Lay Visiting Scheme is then set up in Norwich whereby community volunteers visit the custody facilities at Bethel Street Police Station.

1993

The National Association of Lay Visiting (NALV) is formed (now the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA)). The current Scheme in Norfolk is extended in June to include Great Yarmouth Police Station.



1994

March – Schemes within the Thetford & Kings Lynn areas come into operation.
May – The Scheme in North Walsham commences.
Norfolk also seeks affiliation to the National Association.

1995

Norfolk Police Authority (NPA) - an independent body of 17 Members - takes over responsibility from the County Council's Police Committee for scrutinising the delivery of Norfolk's policing service. Affiliation to the National Association endorsed by the new Police Authority. New Lay Visitors Committee established.



1998

The Authority consolidates the individual area Schemes into a single Lay Visiting Scheme across the County of Norfolk. The Members of the Authority monitor the reports filed by the Lay Visitors, ensuring any concerns or issues raised are brought to the attention of custody officers and addressed. Also a more co-ordinated approach to appointments and training is established.

2000

The implementation of the Human Rights Act and the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into our domestic law. The treatment of those in custody is one key indicator of the extent to which we are embracing the culture of rights which these legal changes are intended to reinforce. Lay Visiting provides an important check on that treatment.



2001

Home Office Circular 15/01 replaces that of 4/92 and Codes of Practice are introduced to provide further clarification about the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the visiting process. It also changes Lay Visiting to ICV and NALV becomes ICVA.

2002

Section 51 of the Police Reform Act makes custody visiting a statutory obligation for Police Authorities in England and Wales. ICV comments support a Custody Scoping Project being undertaken and a decision is taken to investigate options for increased and improved custody facilities throughout Norfolk.



2004

Members of the Authority's Property & ICT Committee review and agree Norfolk Constabulary's Long Term Estates Strategy (LTES). The Strategy proposes to address the renewal, replacement or improvement of 80% of the 50 buildings from which the Force operates. The Long-Term Police Investigation Centres (PIC) Project also gets underway to provide dedicated custody facilities at six sites across Norfolk and Suffolk. (Cambridgeshire were initially involved but subsequently withdrew).



2006

The Guidance on the Safer Detention & Handling of Persons in Police Custody is commissioned by ACPO and the Home Office. Safer Detention Guidance sets clear standards for the care and treatment of detained persons, further professionalising the custody process, ensuring consistency between forces and enabling increased accountability. This is with a view to contributing to enhanced community confidence in the service as a whole.



2009

Norfolk Police Authority, Suffolk Police Authority and the preferred bidder Justice Support Services sign the contract signalling the start of construction on the six Police Investigation Centres (PICs) in Aylsham, Bury, Great Yarmouth, Kings Lynn (also used under agreement by Cambridgeshire Constabulary), Ipswich and Wymondham. March - ICVA are selected by the Ministry of Justice to be one of the bodies that would form part of the UK's “national preventative mechanism” to uphold the United Nations’ “Optional Protocol to the UN Convention Against Torture” (OPCAT). As such, ICVA now form part of the collective of bodies charged with visiting places of detention to investigate the treatment of people deprived of their liberty.

2010



April - Home Office introduce Revised Codes of Practice for Custody Visitors

2011

PICs open throughout the course of the year commencing with Aylsham in February and ending with Great Yarmouth in November of the same year. One Custody Visitor comments: “The new cells are light, airy and are a total contrast to the previous cells at Bethel Street! I feel the facility as a whole provides much better facilities to meet the individual needs of those in detention, as well as providing a much improved working environment for officers and staff”.



2012

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) conduct unannounced inspection of police custody (covering all 6 PICs in Norfolk & Suffolk).



Nick Hardwick, Chief Inspector of Prisons, and Dru Sharpling, HM Inspector of Constabulary, in publishing the report of an unannounced inspection commented that, “Police custody provision in Norfolk and Suffolk was exemplary”

22 November – As outlined in the Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act, Schedule 16, part 3, paragraph 299 (i), responsibility for Custody Visiting transfers to the Local Policing Body for Norfolk, i.e. the Police & Crime Commissioner.