

Independent Custody Visiting Scheme



Annual Report 2015-16

— David Lloyd —
**Police and Crime
Commissioner**
for Hertfordshire



Introduction

by David Lloyd

Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire

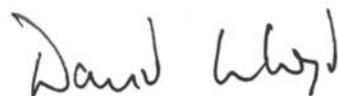
Welcome to the Annual Report of Hertfordshire's Independent Custody Visitors (ICV) Scheme. This report will outline the scheme, look at the volunteers and focus on the visits made from 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016.

I have had statutory responsibility for custody visiting since November 2012. The Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) have enabled me to fulfil this responsibility to ensure that the wellbeing of detainees is monitored and issues relating to detainees or the custody suites are addressed. Their role is to increase public confidence in the custody service and increase transparency. Our ICVs are all volunteers and I would like to thank them for the excellent work they do in checking the welfare of detainees.

We have two custody suites in Hertfordshire located in Hatfield and Stevenage. The volunteers visit the suites unannounced at least once a week, during day or night, to introduce themselves to detainees to check on their health and wellbeing and that their rights and entitlements are upheld. I am pleased to report that no serious issues were reported this year.

This year we said a sad farewell to two of our longest serving ICVs, Lionel Devonish and Keith Cockman who between them have clocked up over 70 years service. I thank them for their dedication and commitment and wish them all the very best for the future.

The focus in the past year has been on inducting our newly recruited volunteers and providing additional training for our existing ICVs to enhance their role and to assist me in ensuring that issues raised by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and the Independent Police Complaints Commission are addressed. We have an excellent custody service in Hertfordshire and our ICVs play a key role in ensuring that we maintain the highest possible standards of welfare for our detainees.



David Lloyd
**Police and Crime Commissioner
for Hertfordshire**



Overview of the scheme

Under the Police Reform Act 2002, all police authorities are required to run a custody visiting scheme. The scheme gives the public reassurance that detainees are being treated fairly by carrying out independent checks on the welfare of detainees, at a time when they may be feeling vulnerable or confused, as well as looking out for issues around cleanliness and maintenance of custody suites.

David Lloyd, the Police and Crime Commissioner, is responsible for the operation of the scheme in Hertfordshire. He appoints a Scheme Administrator from within his office that is responsible for recruiting and training volunteers as well as managing the scheme.

ICVs are unpaid volunteers who live or work in Hertfordshire. Currently there are 33 ICVs from across the county. They are trained to introduce themselves to people in custody to ensure that

their treatment is fair and that they have access to their rights and entitlements. During each visit a Visitor Report Form is produced by the visitors and forwarded to the Commissioner's Scheme Administrator with a copy being left with the Custody Managers at the Custody Suite.

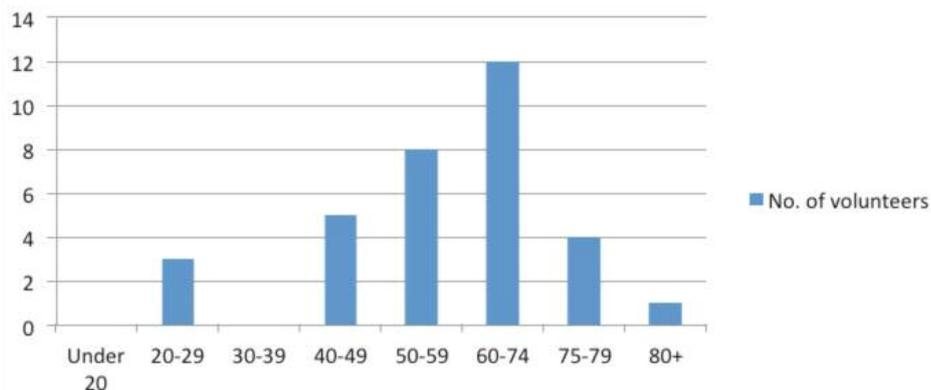
Concerns raised by visitors are reported to the Custody Sergeant at the time of the visit and to the Scheme Administrator in the Commissioner's office who brings them to the attention of the Custody Chief Inspector in their monthly meetings. The visitors will also have a chance to raise general concerns and matters arising from visits during the six monthly meetings. In addition, regular training sessions are held and ICVs have the opportunity to attend the Regional Conference where they can network with ICVs from other areas and share ideas and best practice.

Independent Custody Visitors

There are a total of 33 Independent Custody Visitors who live or work in Hertfordshire, 17 male volunteers and 16 female volunteers. As a result of some retirements from the scheme and new guidance stating that volunteers should serve no more than nine years, we are about to recruit a number of additional volunteers over Summer 2016.

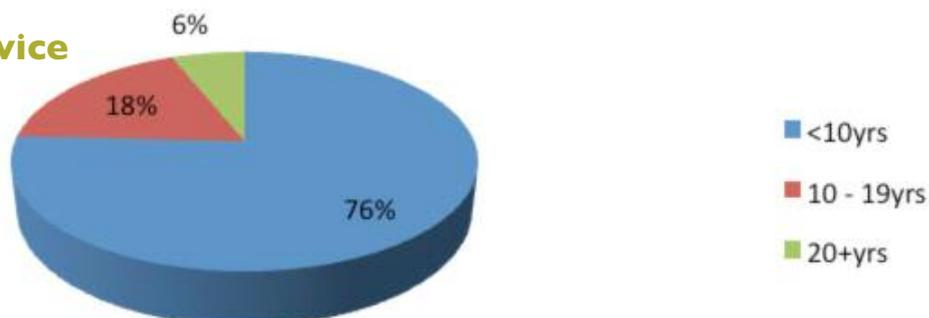
The chart below shows the age range of the Independent Custody Visitors. Around 50% of the volunteers are over 60 years of age and we are hoping to increase the age range and background of our volunteers during the next recruitment phase.

Age Range



The pie chart below shows the length of service for our ICVs. The number of volunteers with 20+ years' service has decreased as some of our longstanding volunteers have now retired. The majority of our ICVs have been volunteering for the scheme for less than ten years.

Length of Service



Visits made by ICVs

From April 2015 to March 2016, Independent Custody Visitors made a total of 111 visits to custody suites. All visits are unannounced and the ICVs had the opportunity to see all the detainees, depending on availability and consent of the detainee. At the time of the visits a total of 1275 persons were detained of which 683 were visited.

Below is a breakdown of the visits from 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016

Custody suite visited	No. of visits undertaken	No. of detained persons held	No. of detainees available to visit	No. of detained persons visited	% of detainees visited (of those available)	No. of detained persons not visited
Hatfield	49	712	388	375	97%	324
Hoddesdon*	7	17	11	10	91%	6
Stevenage	42	461	272	242	89%	189
Watford*	13	85	59	56	95%	26
Total	111	1275	730	683	93%	545

*Hoddesdon custody suite closed during May 2015 and the Watford custody suite closed during August 2015.

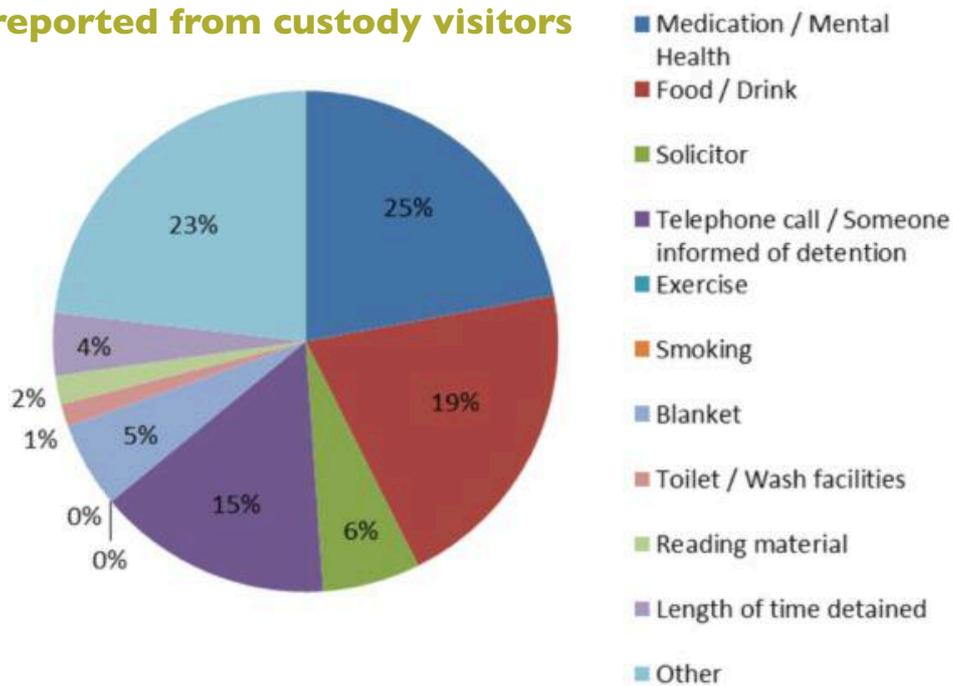
In general the number of detained persons held is higher than last year and although there were fewer visits than last year there were more detainees visited. This is due to the detainees being detained at only two custody suites rather than four and therefore more detainees are being visited during each custody suite visit.

Not all detainees were available or consented to being interviewed by an ICV during a visit. This is due to a number of reasons including when detainees are asleep, intoxicated, violent, in an interview or providing fingerprint/DNA evidence. This year a total of 545 detainees were not available to be visited. This year 47 detainees refused to be interviewed by an ICV.

Issues reported from custody visits

Throughout the duration of the year visitors raised 290 concerns with custody staff. **20%** of these came under the category of other and included within this category are issues relating to refused visits, at interview, being discharged, asleep. **25%** were related to medical or mental health issues. **15%** were requests for phone calls or to inform someone of their detention and **19%** were requests for food.

Concerns reported from custody visitors



In **8%** of the visits there were no detainee concerns. ICVs also recorded 10 positive comments during the year.

During the year ICVs reported issues with facilities. In total **35** issues were recorded, **34%** related to cleanliness, **29%** were with regard to cells being out of action and **6%** were about heating and ventilation. In addition to this, ICVs noted **8** potential staffing issues throughout the year.

ICV Scheme Costs

Although visitors are unpaid, they are reimbursed for travel and subsistence costs. As well as these costs the Commissioner continues, as in previous years, to incur other minimal costs for running the scheme such as training costs, printing costs, catering for panel meetings, conference booking fee etc.



Comments

from the Head of

Hertfordshire Constabulary's

Custody Units

There is much over the last 12 months to reflect upon and, very much as I began last year's comments, again there has been significant change affecting Hertfordshire Custody and the way in which the ICV volunteers work.

In May 2015, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons and also Constabularies conducted a week-long joint unannounced visit to inspect Hertfordshire's Custody Units. The resultant report, which was published last November and which can be read online, was broadly complimentary of the strategy around Custody, and the treatment and conditions of those detained in its cells. The Inspectorates' recommendations were welcomed by the Constabulary and acted upon prior to the publishing of the report. A recent 'follow-up' visit was conducted by the Inspectorates who were pleased with the response.

Also in May 2015, Hoddesdon Custody was closed, followed shortly afterwards in early August by the closure of Watford Custody. This reduced the cell capacity of Hertfordshire Custody from 86 to 54 cells but has made for a more focused, more efficient Custody model, involving improved working practices with a range of partners including Drug and Alcohol teams, Mental Health Teams, and embedded healthcare providers, all designed to achieving the objective of optimising positive outcomes for detainees. The ICV

volunteers' role is to ensure the Constabulary is delivering upon that aim and thereby reinforcing the already strong public confidence in its local police force.

I have worked closely with the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office again this year to help promote further the status and impact of the Independent Custody Visitors Scheme in Hertfordshire. As I stated last year, I regard the work of the ICVs as highly important. The work of the ICV volunteers helps inform and reassure me that the work of my officers and staff, the processes they use, and the environment we provide, are all open to scrutiny at whatever time (always unannounced) the ICVs wish to visit either of the two remaining Custody units at Hatfield and Stevenage. My staff and I are committed to the safe detention and handling of all persons whilst they are held in custody. The 545 detainees visited over the last year is impressive and the written feedback provided by the ICVs on each occasion helps me to identify areas of strength and weakness in our Custody arrangements, whether that be as a pattern between the two custody units or instead highlighting a particular concern at one station. I can then work to correct any potential weakness.

The inspection criteria used by the ICVs has been retuned over the last year to compliment more

keenly the criteria by which the HMIP and HMIC inspect also. This again assists in helping Custody focus in the right areas and respond rapidly to anything that falls short of the excellent service we always strive to provide. The volunteers have responded positively to this change and I thank them for that. I also want to thank personally two of the longest serving ICVs, Mr Lionel Devonish and Mr Keith Cockman, who are both stepping down from their roles which they have practised for over two decades. Their efforts have been extraordinary and they are an inspiration. Thank you.

This will be my final 'comments' section as I am moving on to a new role within the Constabulary, so I would like to again thank all the ICVs for their outstanding efforts over the last few years during my tenure. To achieve such a high rate of visits and provision of such relevant feedback for Custody is exceptional. I wish you all my very best wishes for the future.

Shane O'Neill
Detective Chief Inspector



The future of ICV's

Hertfordshire's ICV scheme has undergone a period of significant change with new volunteers joining the team, a new and more comprehensive training package being delivered and new reporting processes. The Independent Visiting Scheme Association (ICVA) have recently restructured and appointed a new Chief Executive who is working closely with the Home Office to develop and enhance the scheme nationally. Hertfordshire is at the forefront of those developments, helping to inform and shape the future direction of the scheme.

Alongside this the custody teams have also been undergoing a period of significant change meaning that regular and independent visits are more important than ever. As discussed above, we have been using reports from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) and the Independent Police Complaints Commission to target our ICV inspections and use this as a real driver for improvements in our custody services. We intend to continue to develop this targeted inspection process and to improve our reporting mechanisms to further enable the Commissioner to hold the Chief Constable to account.



Conclusion

Independent Custody Visitors are essential in enabling the Police and Crime Commissioner to fulfil his statutory responsibility to ensure that the welfare and rights of detained persons are upheld whilst in police custody. The ICV scheme provides independence, transparency and has increased the public's confidence in the police service and we are very grateful to our volunteers for the time that they contribute to our community through their ICV role.

If you are interested in becoming an Independent Custody Visitor please contact:

Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Administrator
Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
15 Vaughan Road
Harpenden
AL5 4GZ

Telephone: 01707 806100
Email: sam.hale@herts.pnn.police.uk

For more information regarding the role of ICVs and that of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire, please visit www.hertscommissioner.org

For more information on the role of the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA), please visit www.icva.org.uk

