



Independent Custody Detention Scrutiny Panel

Annual Report
2025/26



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Introduction

Police and Crime Commissioner John Tizard

The Independent Custody Detention Scrutiny Panel continues to provide a robust, independent, and professional oversight function through the review of police custody records.

Through its work, the panel promotes transparency and accountability by examining how custody processes are recorded and applied in practice. This scrutiny supports safer custody outcomes and provides assurance to the public that police powers are being exercised fairly and in accordance with legal and ethical standards across Bedfordshire.

This annual report highlights the valuable contribution and impact of the Independent Custody Detention Scrutiny Panel over the past year.

I would like to formally express my sincere thanks to all panel members for their commitment, professionalism, and dedication in delivering this essential scrutiny function on behalf of the people of Bedfordshire.

John Tizard



Introduction



In 2022, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), in partnership with the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC), wrote to all Police and Crime Commissioners recommending the establishment of Custody Detention Scrutiny Panels.

This recommendation arose from the identification of a lack of consistency at a national level in how disproportionality within custody detention profiles was being examined and addressed.

In response, the Bedfordshire Independent Custody Detention Scrutiny Panel (ICDSP) was established by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire.

The Panel's membership include:

- Members of the local community
- Independent Custody Visitors
- Stop and Search and Use of Force Panel members
- The Independent Advisory Group
- The Samaritans

In addition, key custody stakeholders attend meetings on an ad-hoc basis, including representatives from the Appropriate Adult Service, the Liaison and Diversion Service, and healthcare professionals.

Overview

The Panel is granted unprecedented access to redacted custody records selected by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. These records are reviewed to provide independent scrutiny and assurance that detainees are being treated appropriately and are well cared for whilst in custody.

A range of custody-related themes and areas of practice are examined as part of this scrutiny process including the following:

- ☒ Respect and dignity
- ☒ Use of force and strip-searching
- ☒ Examining disproportionality
- ☒ Use of anti-rip clothing
- ☒ Young people and females in custody
- ☒ Access to services in custody

Overview



Who are the chairs of the panel?

“This year has been one of establishment and early learning for the Panel. We have been encouraged by the constructive engagement from Bedfordshire Police and the genuine willingness to support the Panel's work.

Looking ahead, we recognise that effective custody scrutiny requires understanding the wider system. We are therefore committed to deepening our engagement with healthcare providers, Appropriate Adult services, Liaison and Diversion teams, and other partners to gain a fuller picture of how custody works – and how it can work better”



Matt Bailey
Chair



Kayleigh Dean
Vice Chair

“I feel very privileged to scrutinise custody records, and we are very lucky as a panel to have such access to the records and to have a Custody Inspector present at our meetings so we can ask questions directly.

We are updated at every meeting about any changes that have been made in custody, which is always interesting and always in the best interests of the detainees”

Overview

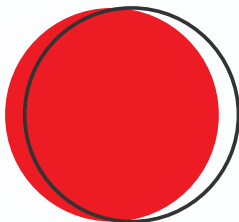


What is the structure of the meetings?

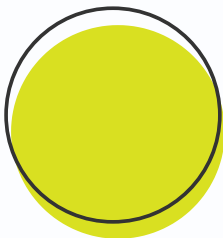
Following a review of the pilot in early 2025, the panel moved from quarterly to bi-monthly meetings to enable more records to be reviewed and to improve the efficiency of police accountability through increased scrutiny.

Meetings usually last between two and three hours and feature a presentation from the Chief Inspector or Inspector on custody data. The Chair and/or Vice Chair then outline the focus areas, before members review custody records, complete a crib sheet, and grade each record as red, amber, or green using the agreed traffic-light system.

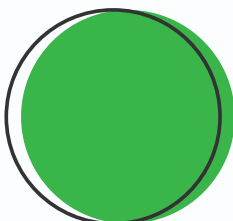
At the end of the meeting, the panel provides feedback to custody on its findings and agrees any action points, which custody is expected to review and report back on to the PCC's office and the panel.



Further exploration required in relation to lack of rationale - case to be raised urgently with Custody Inspector



Further exploration required - an example could be that advice/further training is to be given to custody staff



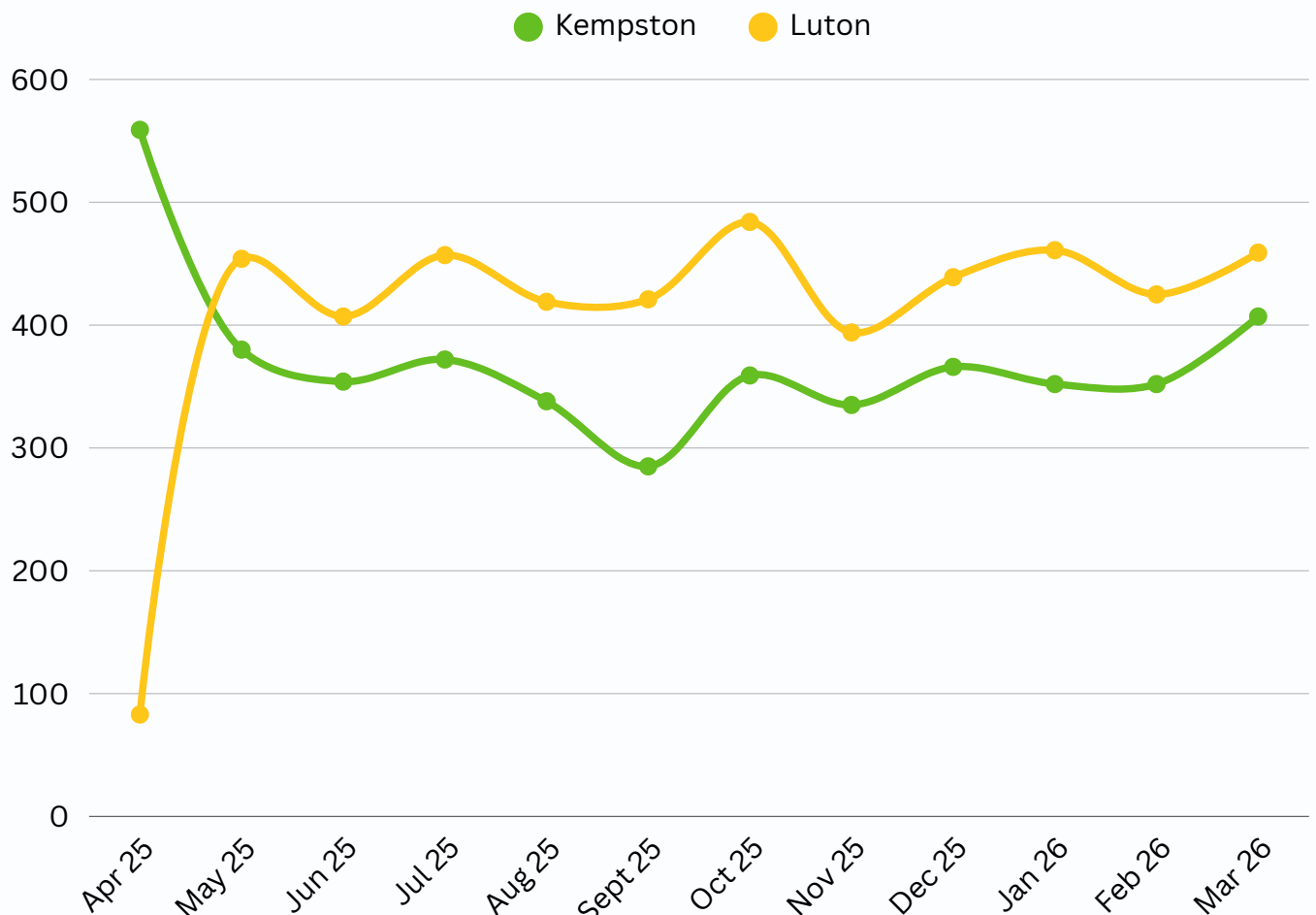
No further action required - positive feedback and good practice to be shared

Custody Data

9734

detainees held in Bedfordshire Police Custody
April 2025 - March 2026

Number of detainees held in Kempston and Luton
April 2025 - March 2026

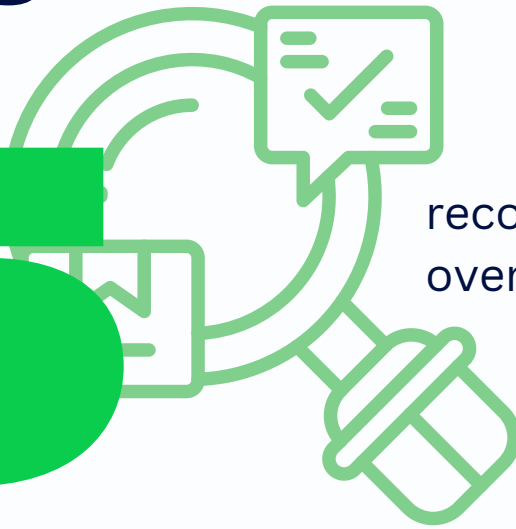


NB: Luton reopened in late April 2025 after refurbishment, which accounts for the lower figures at Luton and the higher figures at Kempston

Findings

45

records reviewed
over 5 meetings



0

records were graded red

5

records were graded amber

40

records were graded green

Findings



The panel noted positively that no custody records were graded as red throughout the year, with only five assessed as amber (11%) out of the 45 cases reviewed. Some examples of findings are listed below.

An appropriate adult (AA) was required when detainee was booked into custody however the AA wasn't contacted until later in the record

Paperwork was clear, and detainee was sent to hospital quickly

High level of detail when recording use of force in custody, incident was clearly and comprehensively documented

Custody record lacked detail documenting when a female officer had been allocated

The appropriate adult time of arrival could not be located on a record

All rights were given, wash was offered, food and drink were given. No concerns from panel member

Impact



Recording of Food and Beverage

The Inspector has fed back to custody teams to ensure that whenever a detainee is offered food or drink, that this is recorded in the custody record. Panel members had observed several instances where this had been missed.

Appropriate Adult Arrival

A reminder has been issued to custody staff that the arrival of an Appropriate Adult must always be documented on the custody record.

Appropriate Adult Delays

Following a panel finding concerning delays in contacting an Appropriate Adult for a detainee who required one, this issue has also been fed back to custody for review. The panel will continue to monitor and assess whether improvements have been made.

Delays between Arrest and Detention

The panel queried the cause of delays and gaps between arrest and detention times. The Inspector provided reassurance that, following this finding, a new process was introduced in October 2025 to prioritise juveniles, ensuring they are booked in ahead of adults.

Impact



Collaboration

Our volunteer scrutiny panels continue to work closely together to improve transparency and learning. The Stop and Search and Use of Force Panel referred a custody-related use-of-force case to the ICDSP for clarification on Healthcare Professional (HCP) involvement.

The ICDSP reviewed the body-worn video and confirmed that the HCP was present during the incident and that the detainee received appropriate medical attention. Members praised the detailed custody record, and positive feedback was shared with the Inspector. This joined-up approach demonstrates effective cross-panel working and reinforces our commitment to transparent oversight, shared learning, and continuous improvement in practice.

Multi-Agency Approach

We strengthened our multi-agency approach this year by engaging key custody stakeholders in our work. In March 2026, we held a collaborative meeting with the Liaison and Diversion Service, Mitie (custody healthcare provider), and the Samaritans, who provided valuable insight into their roles within the custody environment.

We will continue to invite these partners to future panel meetings when their expertise aligns with specific areas of focus, supporting more informed scrutiny and shared learning.

Membership and Recruitment

As of April 2026, we currently have:

- 12 volunteers
- 7 female and 5 male
- 25% of volunteers are from an ethnic minority background

Of the 12 volunteers, 2 are Independent Custody Visitors, 1 is a member of the Use of Force and Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel, 1 is from the Bedfordshire Police Independent Advisory Group and 1 volunteer is a member of the Joint Audit Committee. Other members include those with lived experience and relevant professionals such as the Samaritans.

We are hoping to **increase** the diversity of our panel to accurately represent the community of Bedfordshire and would like to increase our numbers to around 20-25 volunteers.

We are actively recruiting, especially for:

- Those with lived experience of custody and/or with interacting with the police
- External organisations who work with or in the custody environment
- Individuals aged under 25
- Those from an ethnic minority background

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Looking forward

Strengthening Stakeholder Attendance

- Increasing stakeholder attendance through themed sessions featuring stakeholder-led case studies and updates.

Joint Training and Briefings

- Exploring opportunities for joint training with partners (e.g., trauma-informed practices, mental health awareness, learning from national custody cases).

Recruitment

- Recruit more volunteers with lived experience of custody or criminal justice.
- Increase diversity within the panel to better reflect our communities.



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**BEDFORDSHIRE POLICE
CUSTODY**



MORE INFO

<https://www.bedfordshire.pcc.police.uk/independent-custody-detention-scrutiny-panel/>

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