
Annual Report 2017-18

**Bedfordshire
Independent
Custody Visiting
Scheme**





Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Annual Report 2017-18

Introduction

The Police and Crime Commissioner has a statutory responsibility under the Police Reform Act 2002, to run an Independent Custody Visitor (ICV) Scheme. The ICV's are members of the local community who make unannounced visits to custody suites to check on the treatment of detainees and the conditions in which they are held, that their rights and entitlements are being observed, at a time when they may be feeling vulnerable or confused. They also look out for issues around cleanliness and maintenance of custody suites. The scheme provides transparency and reassurance to the wider community.

On the 24 April 2018 - Bedfordshire's Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) welcomed over 70 volunteers working to ensure proper treatment of those in custody to the Independent Custody Visitors' (ICV) Eastern Regional Conference at Police HQ. (Saturday 21 April 2018).

The office of the Bedfordshire PCC leads independent custody inspections working with volunteers in Bedfordshire and is the Regional ICVA lead for force areas throughout the East of England.

Throughout the conference, they heard from speakers including Detective Chief Superintendent Mark Lay on drug use by those in custody, Tom Milson from the Independent Office of Police Conduct (IOPC) on recent changes to the police complaints procedure, the Home Office and Doctor Sabrina Valentino on healthcare in custody. They also received a presentation from the Bedfordshire OPCC's Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, Justine Currell, who was able to offer her expertise as she is also the director of the Modern Slavery charity, Unseen, to explain to the volunteers what signs to look out for to spot evidence of Human Trafficking in custody.

"I was extremely pleased to attend the recent ICV conference to recognise the important role our volunteers play in ensuring the wellbeing of those detained in custody. The importance of local community volunteers, speaking with detainees to ensure their wellbeing and treatment and who have the ability to raise any concerns they have with custody staff is key to the integrity of the custody process and I applaud their ongoing commitment," said Deputy PCC, Justine Currell.

“My office was delighted to host the ICVs from throughout the region who are extremely ably led by the representative within my office, Katie Beaumont. We should remember that those who are held in custody are innocent until proven guilty and that, in any case, it is a mark of civilised law enforcement that those who are brought into custody are treated properly. The tireless - and unpaid - work of the ICVs, making unannounced visits to all our custody suites, helps to ensure that this is the case and that high standards are maintained,” said Bedfordshire’s Commissioner Holloway.

“In this county, we have invested in completely revamping the custody suite at Luton, which viewers of the C4 documentary series “24 Hours in Police Custody” will no doubt have spotted. At Kempston HQ we have a modern and clean, but temporary, custody block which I am looking to replace as a matter of urgency,” she said.

Throughout the Eastern region, there are 154 ICVs assessing the care of those in custody suites in six force areas in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex.

ICVs are members of the local community who, working in pairs, call at police stations without notice, at any time of day and night. The visitors can speak to detainees about their treatment or conditions and take up any issues of concern with custody staff. A short report of their findings is made prior to leaving the station. Their work provides the PCC, and in turn the community, with assurance that anyone arrested by the police and held in custody is treated fairly and has access to appropriate facilities.

The Commissioner’s office works closely with volunteers to ensure that they regularly visit Bedfordshire’s custody suites throughout the year. The scheme in Bedfordshire is run by OPCC Compliance Officer, Katie Beaumont. Katie, who is also the ICV Director for the Eastern Region, arranged the conference for the ICVs to ensure those volunteering are equipped with the most up to date training and information.

“I was delighted to organise Bedfordshire’s opportunity to host the ICV Regional Conference. We had a fantastic turn-out, with volunteers coming from as far as Norfolk and Suffolk to hear from our expert speakers. Most importantly, we got the chance to say thank you for their continued dedication in volunteering their time to visit custody suites across the region,” said Katie Beaumont.

Bedfordshire’s ICV Volunteer Lead, Mark Mason, said, “It was an exceptional Regional Conference from the Bedfordshire OPCC, with plenty of networking opportunities and professional speakers. I have certainly learned more about the different aspects of custody from the need for appropriate adults to accompany the vulnerable to immigration which I can use to enhance my visiting skills and share with my fellow ICVs.”

The PCC’s coordinator for Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs), Katie Beaumont, has been appointed regional director of the scheme, in recognition of Bedfordshire’s

successful recruitment of custody volunteers and Katie's effective leadership of the scheme.

Since November, 13 volunteers have joined Bedfordshire's Independent Custody Visiting Scheme, making a total of 34 volunteers in the team monitoring detainees across the county. ICVs make unannounced visits to custody suites in Luton, Dunstable and Kempston to check and report on their treatment, the conditions of their cells and to ensure their rights are being observed.

"Appointing Katie as regional lead for Independent Custody Visitors really shows how much hard work she has put in to making Bedfordshire an outstanding example of how ICV schemes should be run," said PCC Kathryn Holloway.

"From day one of my term in office, I was impressed by the stories I have heard about the commitment of our volunteers in Bedfordshire. This year alone, our ICVs have flagged health and safety issues, as well as graffiti in the cells and cleaning charts by cell doors not being used. They are also reporting back issues such as mental health concerns and potential self-harm risks, which are hugely important to share with custody staff to safeguard those that are held in custody. Together we are ensuring that our standards in custody are as high as possible and we are building public confidence in this."

Katie, who has been with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner since November 2015, will now represent the Eastern Region at national Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) meetings, looking at strategy, finances and reports alongside other regional directors from across the country.

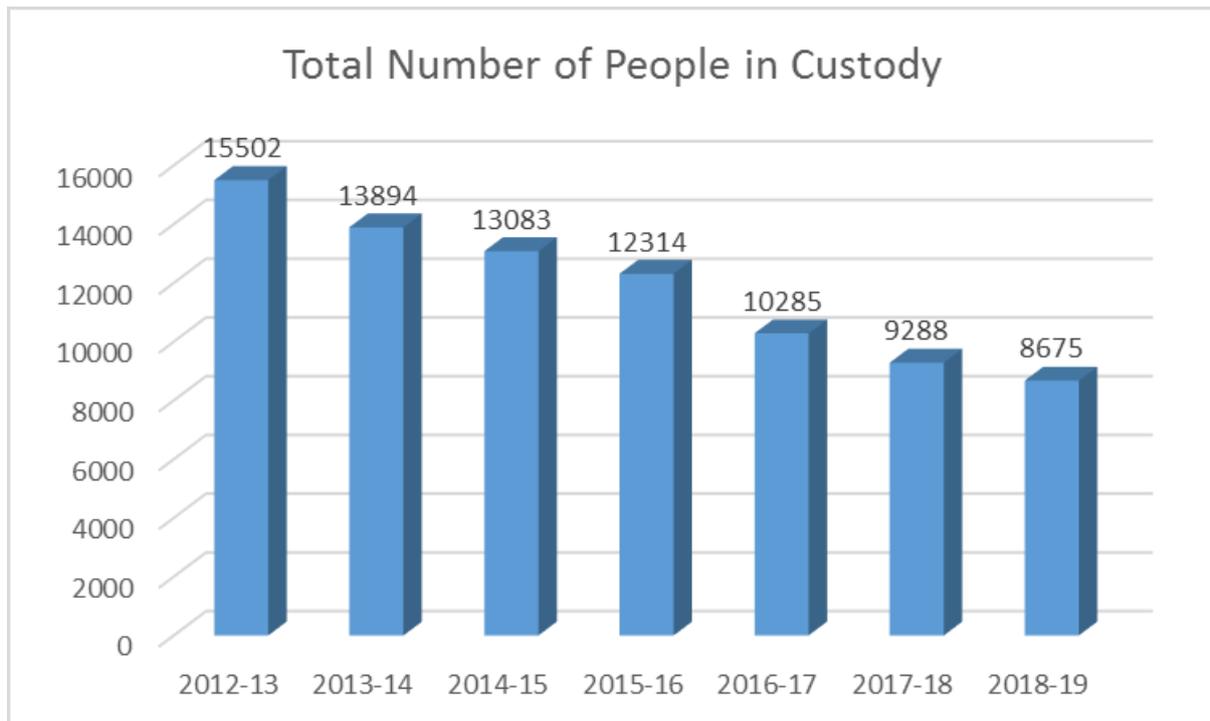
Katie Kempen, Chief Executive of the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA), said: "The Independent Custody Visiting Association is in place to lead, support and represent ICV schemes. Ensuring that our volunteers provide oversight of police detention and to protect the rights and entitlements of detainees, contributing to safer custody and public reassurance.

"We're really excited that Katie is joining the Board, we have watched her initiatives in Bedfordshire with great interest and we think that she will bring her excellent local practice to a national level, ensuring that everybody benefits from Bedfordshire's experience."

Annual Report of Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visiting Scheme 2017-18

This report details the activity of Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visiting Scheme from 01 April 2017 – 31 March 2018. During that time 9288 people were arrested and detained in police custody in Bedfordshire, which is 997 less than the previous year. 870 (9.3%) of those detainees were in custody whilst an Independent Custody Visit was carried out.

Comparison with previous years:	
2017-18	9288 people in custody 870 (9.3%) in custody when custody visit took place
2016-17	10,285 people in custody 856 (8.3%) in custody when custody visit took place
2015-16	12,314 people in custody 752 (6.1%) in custody when custody visit took place
2014-15	13,083 people in custody 897 (6.9%) in custody when custody visit took place
2013-14	13,894 people in custody 870 (6.3%) in custody when custody visit took place
2012-13	15,502 people in custody 808 (5.3%) in custody when custody visit took place
2011-12	16,834 people in custody 857 (5.1%) in custody when custody visit took place
2010-11	18,152 people in custody 870 (4.8%) in custody when custody visit took place



Of the 870 detainees in custody whilst a visit was taking place:

- 316 were at the Kempston Custody Suite
- 554 were at Luton Custody Suite