
Annual Report 2019-20

**Bedfordshire
Independent
Custody Visiting
Scheme**





Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Annual Report 2019-20

Introduction

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner is delighted to present the Annual Report for 2019/20 during which our Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) have continued to provide an essential service by checking on the welfare of people in custody.

We have had a number of new faces this year in the ICV team with 5 volunteers who completed their training. By the end of 2019/20 there were a total of 22 in Bedfordshire.

The OPCC is particularly pleased this year to see the hard work and dedication our volunteers put in has been recognised in a nomination for the Queens Award for Voluntary Service. The ICV team has undergone the assessment and we await the result in the next few months, however it is an accomplishment in itself to get to the assessment stage.

This is a testament to the energy and passion that all of our volunteers have invested in the scheme to ensure it continues to play a crucial role in the custody process in Bedfordshire.

What is Independent Custody Visiting?

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.

Independent Custody Visiting allows the police to demonstrate their commitment to transparency and provides public reassurance that policing in their area is fair and in accordance with statutory legislation and guidance. The aim of this Annual Report is to ensure that this information is available in the public domain.

Annual Report of Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visiting Scheme 2019-20

This report details the activity of Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visiting Scheme from 01 April 2012 – 31 March 2020. The decision was made on the 17 March 2020 for all ICV visits to be suspended until further notice, due to the Coronavirus guidance released by Government. Bedfordshire Police operates from two custody suites at Kempston and Luton.

The cell capacity is as follows:-

- Kempston (18 Cells)
- Luton (21 Cells)

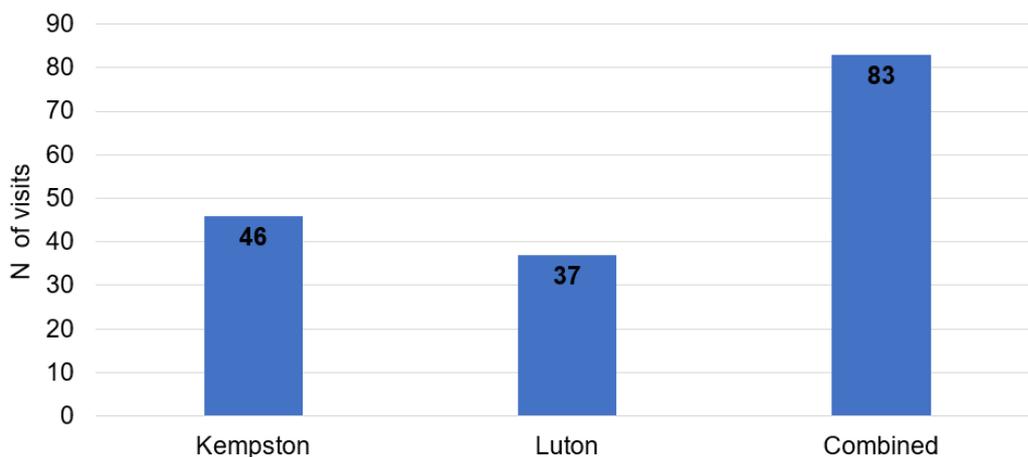
From 1 April 2019 to 17 March 2020, our ICV scheme made a total of 83 visits to custody suites of which a total of 497 detainees were seen during an ICV visit and given the opportunity to raise any issues or concerns they had.

Comparison with previous years:		
2019-20	8444 people in custody	497 (5.9%) in custody when custody visit took place.
2018-19	8675 people in custody	836 (9.7%) in custody when custody visit took place
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

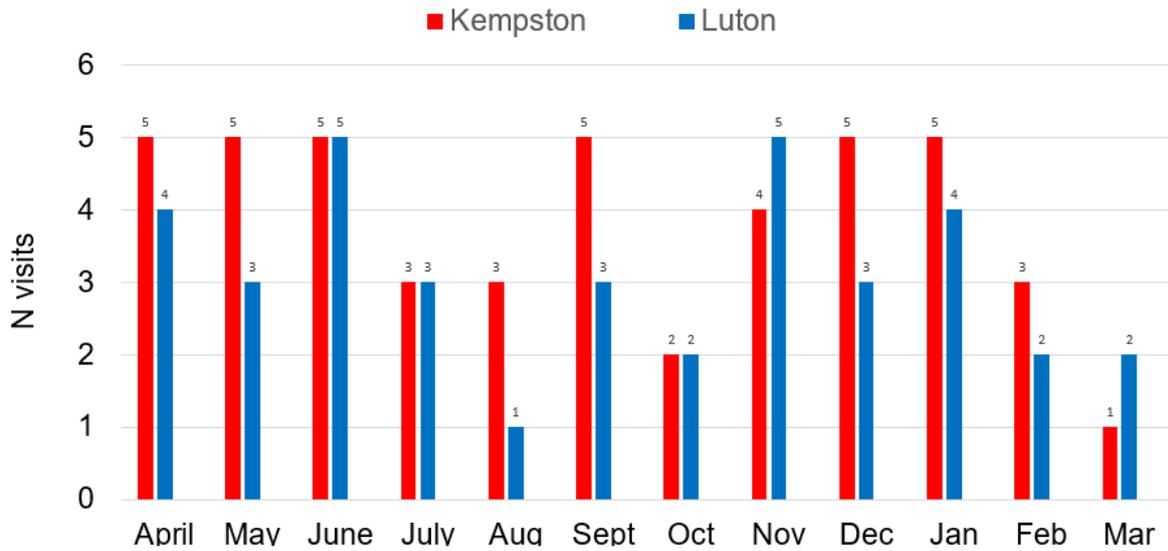
Of the 497 detainees in custody whilst a visit was taking place:

- 226 were at the Kempston Custody Suite
- 271 were at Luton Custody Suite

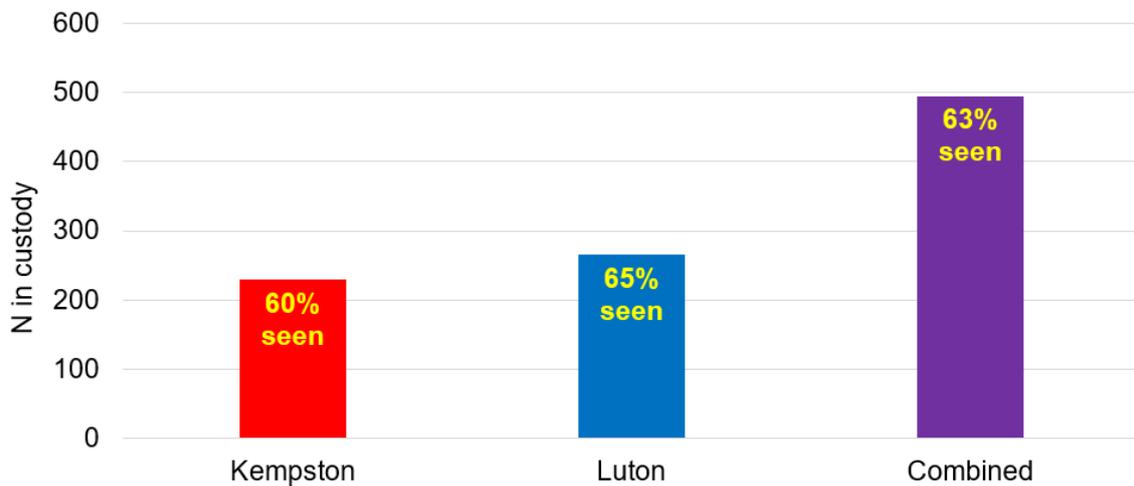
Number of visits completed - by custody suite April 2019 to March 2020



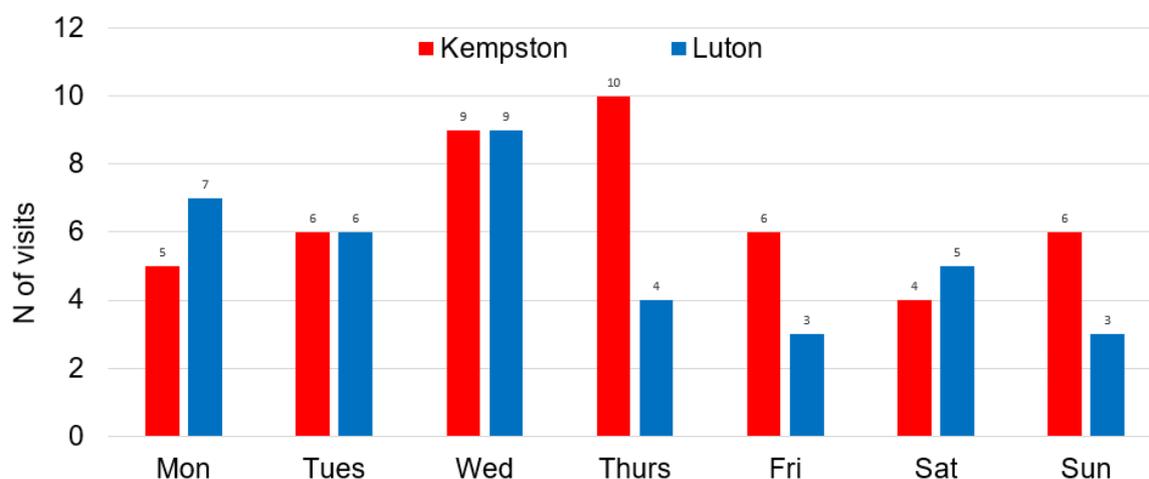
Number of visits by custody suite and month April 2019 to March 2020



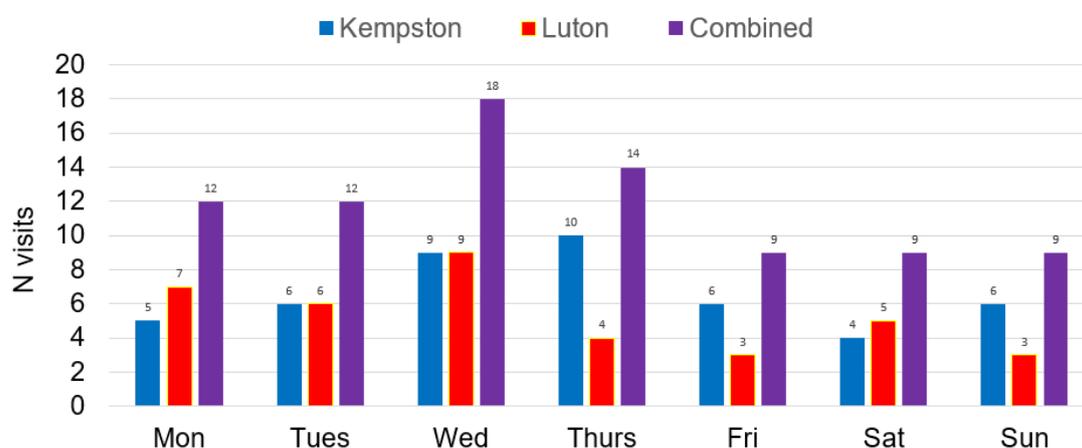
Number in custody and percentage of detainees seen by ICVs



Visits by day of the week and custody suite



Visits by day of the week, by custody suite and combined



Our Volunteers

Bedfordshire has an effective and efficient scheme of 22 dedicated volunteer Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) who were appointed from the community. ICVs are unpaid volunteers who kindly give their time to visit and check on the health and welfare of detainees in police custody. They provide reassurance to the community

that people detained in police custody are looked after appropriately and in accordance with national standards and guidance.

During each visit a Visitor Report Form is produced by the visitors and forwarded to the OPCC with a copy being left with the Custody Inspectors 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 OPCC who brings them to the attention of the Custody Chief Inspector immediately. The visitors will also have a chance to raise general concerns and matters arising from visits during the quarterly panel meetings.

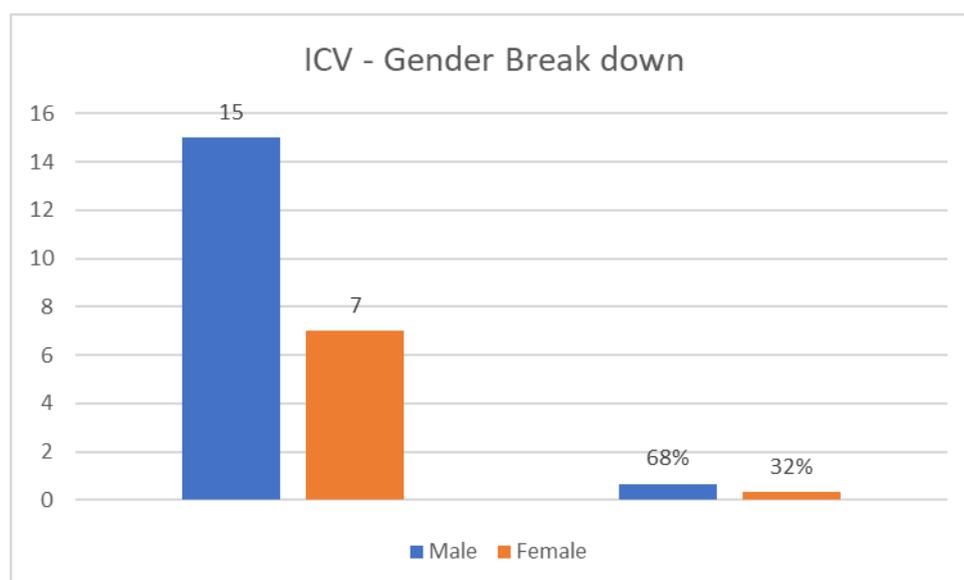
In addition, ICVs have the opportunity to attend the Regional Conference and National Conference where they can network with ICVs from other areas and share ideas and best practice.

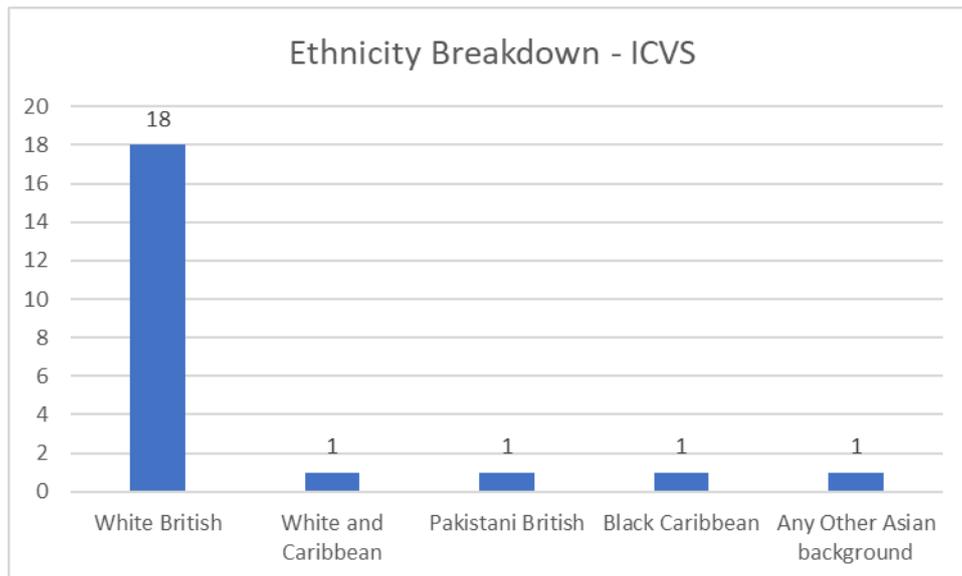
Over the past few years, ICVs have made an impact on behalf of detainees and custody staff by raising concerns on a number of issues or concerns ranging from concerns surrounding the Health and Safety concerns at Kempston to detainees access to religious reading material.

ICVs are able to bring knowledge from their professions and life experiences, as well as their training, to challenge standards and processes in custody and help improve matters for all within the custody environment.

The Scheme seeks to be representative of the local community, including ethnicity, gender and age – please see diversity data table below.

(There have been no disabilities declared by ICVs)





Comments about Custody Staff

Overall, ICVs rated the professionalism of custody officers and staff very highly, and on numerous occasions commented on the staff being extremely helpful.

Comments and Concerns of Detainees

ICVs reported that a significant number of detainees had commented positively on their treatment in Bedfordshire Police Custody.

Diversity Data Recording of Detainees

Diversity data of detainees is collected and monitored to ensure that any matters of concern or trends relating to protected characteristics of detainees identified during the custody visiting process are able to be addressed.

Data categories recorded are gender, age (adult or juvenile), and ethnicity as defined by the detainee and detention category. This is the data as collected on the custody record and is transferred to the custody visiting report. Disability is not recorded but this is picked up in the dignity and risk assessment carried out as each detainee is booked into custody and ICVs would be informed if appropriate.

No specific issues relating to gender, age or detainee category have been reported in 2019/20. Detainees who do not speak English but are able to read in their own language are communicated with by the use of flash cards available within the Eastern Region.

Panel Meetings

All ICVs are invited to attend quarterly panel meetings where matters discussed include an update from the Police and Crime Commissioner's office, updates from Bedfordshire Police Custody, performance monitoring of the scheme and national and regional update information.

Panel meetings are chaired by the OPCC. These meetings are attended by the Chief Inspector of Custody and one or two Custody Inspectors who provide reports to ICVs and keep them up to date with activity within custody.

Regional and National Independent Custody Visiting Association

Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visiting Scheme sits within the Eastern Region with Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. The six scheme administrators meet quarterly to discuss their experiences and share best practice.

Bedfordshire Scheme administrator is the appointed Eastern Regional Lead and continues to work with ICVA. She is a member of the ICVA board and the National Expert Forum (NEF).

Conclusion

Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visitors continue to be committed and dedicated to their role and work hard to reach agreed targets for visiting detainees in Police Custody and meeting their individual visiting requirements.

- (a) detainees in Bedfordshire Police Custody are treated fairly and in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) and associated codes of practice;
- (b) the conditions detainees are kept in are clean and safe and any matters of concern are recorded and dealt with effectively, and;
- (c) the rights and entitlements of detainees in Bedfordshire Police Custody are observed and adhered to.

The Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visiting Scheme is the Police and Crime Commissioners statutory duty and is an example of how members of the community can become involved in policing to really make a difference and be able to promote confidence and reassurance in policing in Bedfordshire.