

---

# Annual Report 2013-14

---

**Bedfordshire  
Independent  
Custody Visiting  
Scheme**

---





# Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Annual Report 2013-14

## Introduction

Independent Custody Visiting is a well established scheme whereby volunteers attend police stations to check on the treatment of detainees and the conditions in which they are held and that their rights and entitlements are being observed. The scheme offers protections and confidentiality to detainees, the police and provides reassurance to the wider community.

In November 2012 the statutory requirement to organise and oversee the delivery of independent custody visiting transferred from police authorities (abolished under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011) to the elected Police and Crime Commissioner for each policing area.

On 15 November 2012 Mr Olly Martins was elected as Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire and he has delegated responsibility for the Scheme to his Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner Tafheen Sharif who is the Chair of the Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visiting Panel.

## Bedfordshire Custody Visitors 2013

Bedfordshire has an effective and efficient scheme of 25 dedicated volunteer independent custody visitors (Custody Visitors), appointed from the community. Custody Visitors give their gift of 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.

Over the past few years custody visitors have made an impact on behalf of detainees and custody staff by raising concerns on a number of health and safety and maintenance issues such as inappropriate replacement clothing, poor standards on cleanliness and infection control, potential hanging risks etc.

Custody visitors 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 has been no recruitment since 2011. With the closure of Dunstable Custody Facility in early 2013 there has been no need to recruit and numbers have dropped to meet the reduced requirements through natural wastage. Sadly this year we lost a number of our younger custody visitors who had joined as university students but have since moved away to pursue their careers. There have been no disabilities declared by custody visitors.

Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visitors Diversity Data 2012-13								
Gender			Age			Ethnicity		
Female	9	36%	18-30	0	0%	White British/Irish	20	80%
Male	16	64%	31-45	2	8%	White Other	1	4%
			46-60	5	20%	Mixed	0	0%
			61-75	16	64%	Asian/Asian British	2	8%
			75+	2	8%	Black/Black British	1	4%
						Chinese/Other	1	4%

## Annual Report of Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visiting Scheme 2013-14

This report details the activity of Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visiting Scheme from 1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014. During that time 13894 people were arrested and detained in police custody in Bedfordshire. 870 (6.3%) of those detainees were in custody whilst an independent custody visit was carried out.

### Comparison with previous years:

<b>2013-14</b>	<b>13894 people in custody</b>	<b>870 (6.3%) in custody when custody visit took place</b>
<b>2012-13</b>	<b>15502 people in custody</b>	<b>808 (5.3%) in custody when custody visit took place</b>
<b>2011-12</b>	<b>16834 people in custody</b>	<b>857 (5.1%) in custody when custody visit took place</b>
<b>2010-11</b>	<b>18152 people in custody</b>	<b>870 (4.8%) in custody when custody visit took place</b>
<b>2009-10</b>	<b>17978 people in custody</b>	<b>955 (5.3%) in custody when custody visit took place</b>

Of the 870 detainees in custody whilst a visit was taking place 312 were at Bedford and 558 at Luton Custody Suites. No detainees were visited at Dunstable Custody Suite during 2013-14 as it was only used as an overflow facility due to changes to the Bedfordshire Policing Model.

### Visits against targets

The closure of Dunstable as a full time custody facility brought the target visits for the year down to 108 - 48 for Bedford and 60 for Luton per year. 96 visits were carried out (43 at Bedford and 53 at Luton) between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014. (89%). Dunstable Custody Suite was visited by arrangement by the Scheme Co-ordinator to ensure that it was maintained fit for use as an overflow facility.

Custody Visitors have been reminded to arrange their visits against the targets through the Scheme Co-ordinator and to arrange visits over all days of the week and times of day.

For more information on all visits carried out from 1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014 refer to the table below.

## VISITS

The table below details visits undertaken by Custody Visitors against targets, including days of the week and times of day, from 1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014.

<b>Custody Visits 1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014</b>											
Custody Suite	Number of visits		Day of week							Time	
	Target	Visits carried	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	6am - 6pm	6pm - 6am
Bedford	48	43	8	9	11	4	4	2	5	19	24
%	100	89	18.6	20.9	25.6	9.3	9.3	4.7	11.6	44.2	55.8
Luton	60	53	8	9	9	6	13	4	3	27	26
%	100	88	15.1	17.0	17.0	11.3	24.5	7.5	5.7	50.9	49.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>50</b>
%	100	89	16.7	18.8	20.8	10.4	17.7	6.3	8.3	47.9	52.1

Dunstable Police Station has not been regularly used for the detention of persons in police custody during 2013-14 and was visited on an appointment only basis to ensure the facility was kept ready for use if required.

## Outcomes of visits

Of the 870 people in custody when visits were undertaken from 1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014, 620 (71%) were interviewed and 250 (29%) were not visited for reasons as detailed in the table below.

Custody records of detainees incapable of giving their verbal permission were checked to provide reassurance to Custody Visitors about their health and welfare.

### Reasons why Detainees were unable to be seen by Custody Visitors

Unavailable for Custody Visit 2013-14	Bedford	Luton	Total	% of 870
In interview/being processed	32	77	109	12.5
Declined interview	4	9	13	1.5
Detainee asleep	6	17	23	2.6
Detainee aggressive/violent	3	12	15	1.7
With doctor/medic/at hospital	5	11	16	1.8
Unwell – not seen	0	5	5	0.6
Not seen- no reason given	1	7	8	0.9
Failed visit	34	11	45	5.2
Released/transferred during visit	1	15	16	1.8

## Issues and Concerns of Custody Visitors

Custody Visitors check on the treatment of detainees and the conditions that they are held in. A number of issues were raised by Custody Visitors on the conditions within custody, particularly around staffing levels, maintenance issues, poor

standards of cleaning and health and safety matters. All concerns reported can be found in the table below.

The following issues and concerns were raised by Custody Visitors 1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014.

Matters of concern April 2012-March 2013	Bedford	Luton	Total
<b>Health and Safety Concerns (8)</b>			
alarm strip not working properly	2		2
cells cold	1	1	2
detainee wearing shoes with laces	1		1
sharps box full		1	1
shower - flooding floor -slip hazard	1	1	2
<b>Maintenance Issues (49)</b>			
ceiling in corridor needs repair		1	1
graffiti	4	4	8
ligature point (detention room)	1		1
light bulb needs replacing/faulty	4		4
night light too dim	1		1
paving slab in yard loose	1		1
problem with water supply to wash basin	8	1	9
sound proofing poor in holding room - can hear conversation outside		1	1
spy holes in door scratched - unable to see through	1		1
toilet - not working properly/leaking	2	18	20
yard light not working	2		2
<b>Equipment (13)</b>			
CCTV - problems with	1		1
chair in medical room worn- needs replacing		1	1
evidence bags out of date	1		1
microphone not working	1		1
no paper towels in medical room	1		1
shower mat - not available	1		1
shower mat – dirty/poor condition	2	5	7
<b>Cleaning Issues (27)</b>			
cigarette ends/litter in yard	7	1	8
dirty cell	9	3	12
kitchen dirty		3	3
medical room in poor state of repair		2	2
poor cleaning (general)		1	1
tunnel needs cleaning		1	1
<b>Staffing Issues (13)</b>			
concern regarding low staff numbers	3		3
delay in starting visit	2	2	4
failed visit- staff shortage	5		5
staff unaware of ICV process	1		1

<b>Other (7)</b>			
food out of date		1	1
IT problems in custody		1	1
no space for ICVs to write report		1	1
no staff on front desk -access difficult by phone		1	1
reception phone not working		2	2
waiting for appropriate adult - delay in processing detainee		1	1
	63	54	117

With the exception of one detainee being found wearing shoes with laces - a potential ligature risk, all matters of concern raised by Custody Visitors related to estates and staffing. There were no concerns raised by Custody Visitors about the health and welfare of detainees. All detainees were found to have been provided with their rights and entitlements, food, drink, medical care and blankets as appropriate. All detainees were risk assessed as part of the booking in process and Custody Visitors had access to the risk assessment with the custody record if they wished to reassure themselves on any matters raised by detainees or if the detainee was incapable of giving their consent.

Custody Visitors reported five failed visits at Bedford Custody due to low staff numbers between June and November and this matter was addressed as unacceptable with the Force whereby it was agreed that extra police staff would attend custody to ensure visits could always be carried out albeit there may be a slight delay. Custody visitors were reminded that they have authority to contact the Custody/Duty Inspector if this situation arose again.

Custody visitors are aware that the custody estate is becoming very dated by modern 21st century standards and that Bedfordshire Police are looking to update its facilities in the near future. Despite the condition of the estate Custody Visitors have found that all detainees they have visited have been treated fairly, that the conditions they have been kept in are clean and safe, that any risks/matters associated with the dated estate have been recognised and appropriate measures put in place and that all detainee rights and entitlements have been adhered to.

Custody visitors reported very long delays for some maintenance repairs within custody resulting in some issues being recorded repeatedly.

Custody Visitors check all areas of custody including cells, kitchen areas, interview rooms, store cupboards, medical rooms, corridors, shower and toilet facilities etc. Issues of poor standards of cleanliness are often reported in one area of custody whilst the report might also comment on good standard of cleanliness in another area.

Custody Visitors should have immediate access to custody but it is accepted that a short wait might be acceptable for certain reasons such as a health and safety issue or visitors arriving at handover. Custody Visitors should always expect an

explanation and can escalate a concern to the Custody/Duty Inspector if they feel it necessary.

The Custody Visiting reports are monitored by the Force to ensure that issues are reported to and addressed by the relevant department.

Persistent maintenance issues that come to the notice of the Scheme Administrator whilst inputting data from custody report forms are passed to the Head of Estates to ensure they are addressed in a timely way.

Any significant matters reported by Custody Visitors are addressed by the Chair of the Panel, The Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, to the chief officers of Bedfordshire Police.

### **Comments about custody staff**

Custody Visitors did report many positive comments about the professionalism and conduct of custody officers and staff (51). There were no negative comments about the conduct of staff.

Custody visitors did report their concerns about low staffing numbers and low morale of custody staff with new shift patterns when a revised policing model was introduced but these problems were resolved by the Force themselves following a review and once new detention staff were able to be recruited and deployed.

### **Comments and Concerns of Detainees**

Custody Visitors check on the treatment of detainees and the conditions in which they are held and that their rights and entitlements are being observed. During visits in 2013-14 detainees were able to raise a number of concerns/requests with Custody Visitors, the highest number of requests being for: 1) food or drink, 2) a blanket and 3) a phone call/to have someone informed of their detention. A full list of issues and concerns raised by detained persons during a conversation with Custody Visitors can be found in the table below.

Custody Visitors, on checking with the escorting officer or/and the custody record, found that these requests were usually as a result of a detainee changing their mind since last speaking with custody staff rather than any neglect. Custody Visitors reported that a significant number of detainees had commented positively on their treatment in Bedfordshire Police Custody.

## Issues and Concerns of Detainees

The following concerns were raised by detainees in conversation with Custody Visitors

Issues and concerns raised by detained persons 1 April 2012- 31 March 2013	No.
complained of being cold/ requested blanket	29
had concern regarding child/dependent	8
had concern regarding pets	4
had concern regarding their medical condition/medication/ requested to see doctor/health care professional	14
requested exercise	3
requested food and/or drink	33
requested nicotine lozenge/cigarette	5
requested reading material	8
requested shower	4
requested solicitor	11
requested to have someone informed	3
requested to make phone call	22
requested toilet paper	3

## Diversity Data recording of Detainees

Diversity data of detainees is collected and monitored to ensure 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), ethnicity as defined by the detainee, 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 Custody Visitors would be informed if appropriate.

No specific issues relating to gender, age or detainee category have been reported in 2013-14. 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 in the 18 most used languages within the Eastern region.

The 2011 Census findings for the ethnic minority population across the Bedfordshire Police Force area were 22.5% with Bedford Borough at 19.4%, Central Bedfordshire 6.1% and Luton Borough 45.3%. The data collected from custody visiting records shows that the breakdown by protected characteristic is broadly as expected in comparison with previous years and in line with local authority statistics and that no matters of concern have been identified.



Full details of diversity data of the 870 persons in police custody whilst a custody visit was carried out can be found below.

### Diversity Data of Detainees 1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014

#### Gender

	Bedford	Luton	Total	%
Female	39	64	103	12
Male	239	477	716	82
Not Stated	34	17	51	6

#### Age

	Bedford	Luton	Total	%
Adult	259	478	737	85
Juvenile	18	55	73	8
Not Stated	35	25	60	7

#### Detainee Category

	Bedford	Luton	Total	%
PACE	232	454	686	79
HO Prisoner	5	10	15	2
Immigration	7	28	35	4
At Risk	1	5	6	1
Other	32	27	59	7
Not Stated	35	34	69	8

### Ethnicity (as defined by the detainee)

		Bedford		Luton		Total		
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	%
<b>ASIAN OR ASIAN BRITISH</b>								
<b>A1</b>	Indian	13	4.2	26	4.7	39	4.5	
<b>A2</b>	Pakistani	9	2.9	43	7.7	52	6.0	
<b>A3</b>	Bangladeshi	1	0.3	5	0.9	6	0.7	
<b>A9</b>	Asian Other	10	3.2	26	4.7	36	4.1	15.3
<b>BLACK OR BLACK BRITISH</b>								
<b>B1</b>	Caribbean	9	2.9	33	5.9	42	1.8	
<b>B2</b>	African	7	2.2	19	3.4	26	3.0	
<b>B9</b>	Black other	7	2.2	20	3.6	27	3.1	10.9
<b>MIXED</b>								
<b>M1</b>	White and Black Caribbean	5	1.6	10	1.8	15	1.7	
<b>M2</b>	White and Black African	0	0.0	5	0.9	5	0.6	
<b>M3</b>	White and Asian	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
<b>M9</b>	Mixed other	1	0.3	2	0.4	3	0.3	2.6
<b>CHINESE AND OTHER ETHNIC GROUP</b>								
<b>O1</b>	Chinese	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	0.0	
<b>O9</b>	Other Ethnic group	2	0.6	2	0.4	4	0.5	0.5
<b>WHITE</b>								
<b>W1</b>	British	184	59.0	263	47.1	447	51.4	
<b>W2</b>	Irish	2	0.6	3	0.5	5	0.6	
<b>W9</b>	Other	19	6.1	67	12.0	86	9.9	61.9
<b>NS</b>	Not stated	43	13.8	34	6.1	77	8.9	8.9

### Panel meetings

All Custody Visitors 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 Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, Tafheen Sharif. These meetings are attended by the Chief Inspector of Custody and one or two Custody Inspectors who provide very candid reports to Custody Visitors and keep them up to date with activity within custody.

### Scheme Co-ordinator

Bedfordshire Independent Custody Scheme has a Scheme Co-ordinator, appointed on a two yearly cycle, who works hard to oversee all visits are carried out against the set targets and monitor that all visitors are meeting their target of 6 -12 visits per year. He works closely with the Scheme Administrator to ensure that the scheme runs as smoothly as possible and has responsibility to mentor new recruits. Mike Rudd has held this role for a number years and has been reappointed from 2013-2015. The co-ordinator role is considered of great value by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

## **Other Activity by Custody Visitors**

The Scheme Administrator continues to contribute to Custody Sergeant and Detention Officer training, advising the roles and responsibilities of the statutory scheme and forming good working relations with custody staff.

Custody Visitors continue to be supported by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to give talks on Independent Custody Visiting to various groups and organisations across the county and raise awareness of the good work of the scheme.

## **Training and Conferences**

Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visiting Scheme hosted the Eastern Region ICV Conference in June 2013 at The Rufus Centre in Flitwick. There were over 100 delegates from Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk in attendance. The programme included 'The Work of the Youth Offending Service', 'Emergency Duty Teams' and 'Police Use of Force and Restraints'.

Custody Visitors attended training workshops on Mental Health hosted by Bedfordshire Police.

## **Retention and Recruitment**

Several Custody Visitors left Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visiting Scheme in year 2013-14 for a variety of reasons and each was thanked for their contribution to the scheme and wished the best for the future. There has been no recruitment of Custody Visitors in 2013-14 due to the reduction in target visits with the closure of Dunstable Custody Suite. It is expected that a recruitment campaign will be conducted in 2014-15 to boost numbers.

## **Regional and National Independent Custody Visiting Association**

Bedfordshire 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. The region does hold an annual conference for all Custody Visitors to attend, hosted on rotation by each Scheme.

The Bedfordshire Scheme Administrator was appointed a Director of the National Independent Custody Visiting Association in March 2014 to represent the Eastern Region.

## 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.

Bedfordshire Custody Visiting Scheme continues to share a supportive and effective working relationship with Bedfordshire Police. Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visiting Scheme provides reassurance that:-

- (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) that the conditions detainees are kept in are clean and safe and any matters of concern are recorded and dealt with effectively;  
and
- (c) that the rights and entitlements of detainees in Bedfordshire Police Custody are observed and adhered to.

The Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visiting Scheme sits within the Commissioner's Confident Communities Strategy and is an example of how members of the community can become involved in policing, really make a difference and be able promote confidence and reassurance in policing in Bedfordshire.

The success of the Bedfordshire Scheme is due to the commitment and dedication of its Custody Visitors and the professional working relationship that has developed over many years with Bedfordshire Police Force.

The Police and Crime Commissioner would like to thank all Bedfordshire Custody Visitors for their generous gift of time and their hard work.

**Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire**  
Bridgebury House | Woburn Road | Kempston | Bedfordshire | MK43 9AX  
Tel: 01234 842 064 | Email: [pcc@bedfordshire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:pcc@bedfordshire.pnn.police.uk)  
Web: [bedspcc.org](http://bedspcc.org) | Twitter: [@BedsPCC](https://twitter.com/BedsPCC)

