
Annual Report 2014-15

**Bedfordshire
Independent
Custody Visiting
Scheme**





Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Annual Report 2014-15

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 protection 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 Chief of Staff.

Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visitors 2014-15

Bedfordshire has an effective and efficient scheme of 25 dedicated volunteer Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) appointed from the community. ICVs 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, ICVs 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 of cleanliness and infection control, potential hanging risks etc.

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 has been no recruitment since 2011. There have been no disabilities declared by ICVs.

Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visitors Diversity Data 2014-15								
Gender			Age			Ethnicity		
Female	9	36%	18-30	0		White British/Irish	20	80%
Male	16	64%	31-45	3	12%	White Other	1	4%
			46-60	5	20%	Mixed	0	
			61-75	16	64%	Asian/Asian British	2	8%
			75+	1	4%	Black/Black British	1	4%
						Chinese/Other	1	4%

Annual Report of Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visiting Scheme 2014-15

This report details the activity of Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visiting Scheme from 01 April 2014 – 31 March 2015. During that time 13,083 people were arrested and detained in police custody in Bedfordshire. 897 (6.9%) of those detainees were in custody whilst an independent custody visit was carried out.

Comparison with previous years:

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 897 detainees in custody whilst a visit was taking place:

- 224 were at Bedford and Kempston custody suites
- 565 were at Luton custody suite, and
- 108 were at Dunstable custody suite

The Bedford custody suite closed in April 2014, with the Kempston custody suite opening in September 2014. The Dunstable custody suite was used in the interim, from April to September 2014.

Visits

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

For more information on all visits carried out from 01 April 2014 – 31 March 2015 refer to the table below.

VISITS

The table below details visits undertaken by ICVs, including days of the week and times of the day, from 01 April 2014 – 31 March 2015.

Custody Visits 01 April 2014 – 31 March 2015										
	Number of visits	Day of week							Time	
Custody Suite	Visits carried out	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	6am - 6pm	6pm - 6am
Bedford	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
%			50		50					100
Dunstable	19	6	2	6	1	3	0	1	8	11
%		31.6	10.5	31.6	5.2	15.9	0	5.2	42.1	57.9
Kempston	27	1	7	12	2	3	0	2	13	14
%		3.7	25.9	44.4	7.4	11.2	0	7.4	48.1	51.9
Luton	49	8	18	8	4	4	2	5	28	21
%		16.3	36.7	16.3	8.2	8.2	4.1	10.2	57.1	42.9
Total	97	15	28	26	8	10	2	8	49	48
%		15.5	28.9	26.8	8.2	10.3	2.1	8.2	50.5	49.5

Outcomes of Visits

Of the 897 people in custody when visits were undertaken from 01 April 2014 – 31 March 2015, 674 (75.1%) were interviewed and 223 (24.9%) 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 ICVs about their health and welfare.

Reasons why Detainees were unable to be seen by ICVs

Unavailable for Custody Visit 2014-15	Bedford	Dunstable	Kempston	Luton	Total	% of 897
In interview/being processed	1	7	22	79	109	12.2
Detainee asleep			15	16	31	3.5
Released/transferred during visit	1	2	2	20	25	2.8
With doctor/medic/at hospital			6	14	20	2.2
Declined interview		1	6	7	14	1.6
Not seen- no reason given		1		10	11	1.2
Detainee aggressive/violent		2	1	5	8	0.9
Making phone call		1	1		2	0.2
In exercise yard				2	2	0.2
Unwell – not seen				1	1	0.1
Failed visit					0	0

Issues and Concerns of ICVs

ICVs check on the treatment of detainees and the conditions that they are held in. A number of issues were raised by ICVs on the conditions within custody. All concerns reported can be found in the table below.

The following issues and concerns were raised by ICVs between 01 April 2014 – 31 March 2015.

Matters of concern April 2014-March 2015	Bedford	Luton	Dunstable	Kempston	Total
MAINTENANCE ISSUES (47)					
Toilet – not working properly/leaking		12		1	13
Graffiti		8	1		9
Cells damaged and not in use		5	3	1	9
Floor paint flaking		3			3
Damage to Board/Grill behind toilet	1	1			2
Floor drain cover loose/broken		1	1		2
Wall damage in yard			1		1
Washbasin outlet blocked		1			1
Door frame sealant lifting		1			1
Spy glass obscured			1		1
Washbasin outlet blocked		1			1
Windows damaged		1			1
Cupboard door hinge broken		1			1
Light not working				1	1
Leak in roof				1	1
CLEANING ISSUES (17)					
Food prep area/kitchen dirty		5			5
Fridge dirty		2			2
Cell floor dirty				2	2
Kitchen untidy		2			2
Cups blocking yard drain		2			2
Cell dirty		1			1
Dirty mattress				1	1
Litter in yard		1			1
Poor cleaning medical room				1	1
HEALTH & SAFETY CONCERNS (14)					
Cells hot				4	4
Cells cold		1		3	4
Sharps box full/not secure		2			2
Bin overflowing (outside custody suite) fire hazard				1	1
Detainees made to use staff toilet				1	1
Hazardous material in cell				1	1
Bin full in medical room				1	1
EQUIPMENT (14)					
Shower mat – dirty/poor condition		2	1		3
Microphone not working			1	1	2
No paper towels				2	2

System / phone issues				1	1
CCTV - problems with			1		1
No hand soap				1	1
No towels for showers				1	1
No bin in basin area				1	1
Medical equipment out of date/missing				1	1
Noisy air conditioning				1	1
STAFFING ISSUES (10)					
Delay in starting visit		5	1	1	7
Staff unaware of ICV process		1			1
Failure to interview within 6 hours		1			1
Failed visit- staff shortage		1			1
OTHER (10)					
Confidentiality issue in front desk				2	2
Missing language flash cards		2			2
No forms available		1		1	2
Cell watch team on smartphone		1			1
DO attending next to DP during ICV visit			1		1
Agency conflict				1	1
Delay in providing food and drink		1			1
TOTALS	1	66	12	33	112

ICVs 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 standards of cleanliness in another area.

ICVs 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 issues or ICVs arriving at handover. ICVs 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 ICVs are addressed by the Chair of the Panel, the Chief of Staff.

Comments About Custody Staff

During the 194 visits, there were only four negative comments about the conduct of custody officers and staff and these were all addressed in response to the visit reports.

Overall, ICVs rated the professionalism and conduct of custody officers and staff very highly.

Comments and Concerns of Detainees

ICVs 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 2014-15, detainees were able to raise a number of concerns/requests with ICVs, the highest number of requests being for: 1) a blanket, 2) food or drink and 3) a phone call. A full list of issues and concerns raised by detainees during a conversation with ICVs can be found in the table below.

ICVs 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 ICVs:

Issues and concerns raised by detainees 01 April 2014- 31 March 2015	No.
Complained of being cold/ requested blanket	31
Requested food and/or drink	25
Requested to make phone call	18
Had concern regarding their medical condition/medication/ requested to see doctor/health care professional	14
Requested solicitor	11
Requested nicotine lozenge/cigarette	7
Had concern regarding child/dependent	5
Requested someone be informed	5
Had not been given rights	5
Refused access to make a phone call	4
Requested exercise	4
Had concern regarding cleanliness of cell/cell contents	3
Concerned about property (outside of custody suite)	3
Requested to wash hands/shower	3
Requested reading material	3
Requested toilet paper	3
Had concern regarding pets	2
Requested medication	2
Requested fresh air	2
Concern over time to answer call buzzer	2

Concern over whole process	2
Had concern re toilet privacy	1
Requested copy of rights in an alternative language	1
Complained of wrist pain from handcuffs	1

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), 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 2014-15. 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%.

Full details of diversity data of the 897 persons in police custody during custody visits can be found below.

Diversity Data of Detainees 01 April 2014 – 31 March 2015

Gender

	Bedford	Dunstable	Kempston	Luton	Total	%
Female	2	11	30	73	116	12.9
Male	13	97	179	491	780	87
Not Stated	0	0	0	1	1	0.1

Age

	Bedford	Dunstable	Kempston	Luton	Total	%
Adult	13	100	193	512	818	91.2
Juvenile	2	7	14	42	65	7.2
Not Stated	0	1	2	11	14	1.6

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 Chief of Staff. These meetings are attended by the Chief Inspector of Custody and one or two Custody Inspectors who provide very candid reports to ICVs 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 monitors that all ICVs 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 ICVs

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.

ICVs 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.

Retention and Recruitment

One ICV left the Scheme during the year as she had moved away from the area. There has been no recruitment of ICVs in 2014-15 although a recruitment campaign will be conducted in 2015-16 to boost numbers.

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.

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 Independent 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) 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 sits within the Commissioner's Confident Communities Strategy 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.

The success of the Bedfordshire Scheme is due to the commitment and dedication of its ICVs 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 Independent Custody Visitors for their generous gift of time and their hard work.

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