
Annual Report 2016-17

**Bedfordshire
Independent
Custody Visiting
Scheme**





Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Annual Report 2016-17

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 and the police, as well as providing reassurance to the wider community.

Under the Police Reform Act 2002, all police authorities are required to run a custody visiting scheme. The scheme gives the public reassurance that detainees are being treated fairly by carrying out independent checks on the welfare of detainees, at a time when they may be feeling vulnerable or confused, as well as looking out for issues around cleanliness and maintenance of custody suites.

On 12th May 2016, Mrs Kathryn Holloway was elected as Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire and she has delegated responsibility for the Scheme to her Compliance Officer.

We have two custody suites in Bedfordshire located in Kempston and Luton. On the rare occasion, Bedfordshire ICVs may have to visit the Dunstable suite; this will only occur if any of custody suites are closed or if the other suites are full.

The volunteers visit unannounced once a week, during the day or night, to introduce themselves to detainees to check on their health and wellbeing and that their rights and entitlements are upheld.

This year we have sad farewell to three of our Independent Custody Visitors. The Police and Crime Commissioner would like to thank them for their commitment and wish them well for the future.

Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visitors 2016-17

Bedfordshire has an effective and efficient scheme of 30 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 Commissioner’s Compliance Officer 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 Commissioner’s Office who brings them to the attention of the Custody Chief Inspector immediately and within their 6 weekly meetings. 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 new refurbishment of Luton Custody to Health and Safety concerns at Kempston.

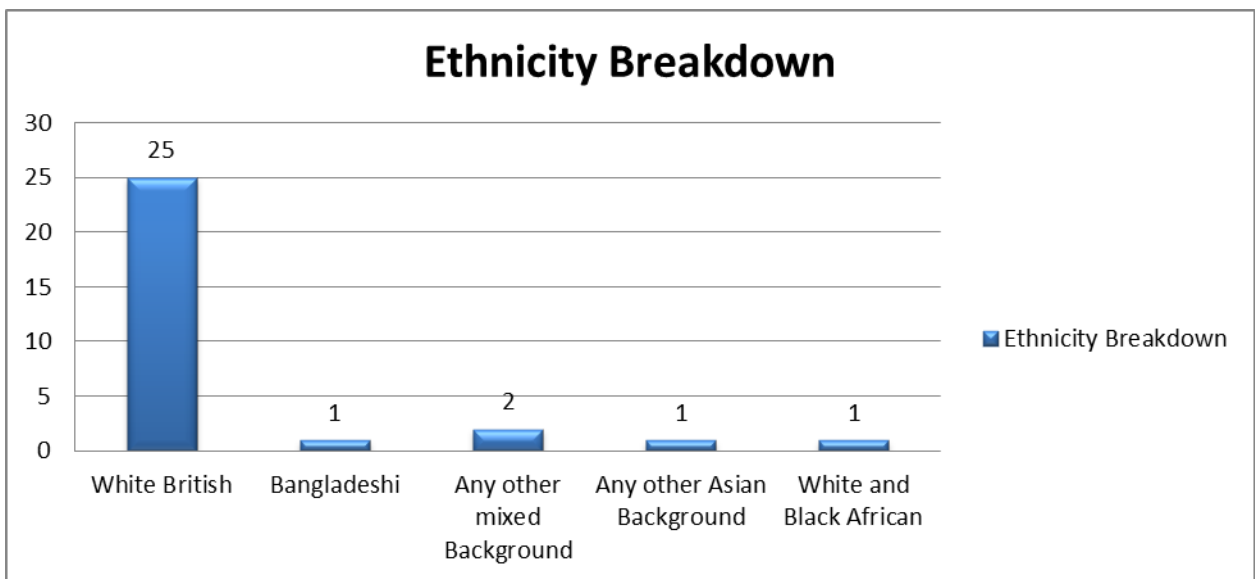
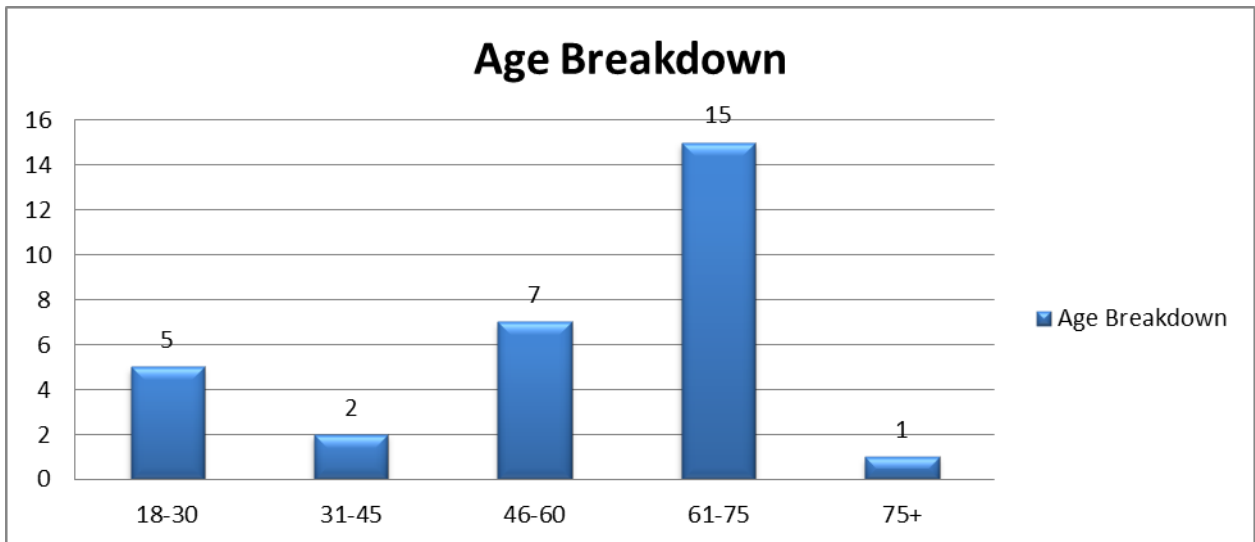
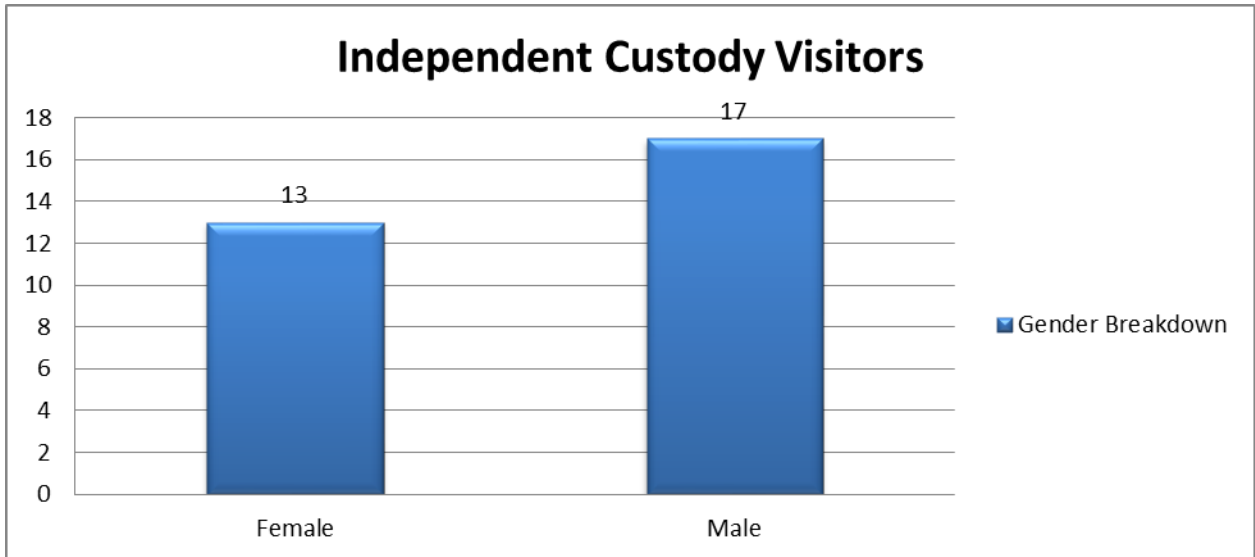
ICVs are able to bring knowledge from their professions and life experiences, as well as their training, to challenge standards and processes in custody and help improve matters for all within the custody environment.

Two of our ICVs have also participated in a Custody Observational Visit (COV), which has shown a real insight to going on of custody and many more ICVs wish to do this too.

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)

Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visitors Diversity Data 1 st April 16- 31 st March 17								
Gender			Age			Ethnicity		
Female	13	43%	18-30	5	17%	White British	25	84%
Male	17	57%	31-45	2	7%	Bangladeshi	1	3%
			46-60	7	23%	Any other mixed Background	2	7%
			61-75	15	50%	Any other Asian Background	1	3%
			75+	1	3%	White and Black African	1	3%

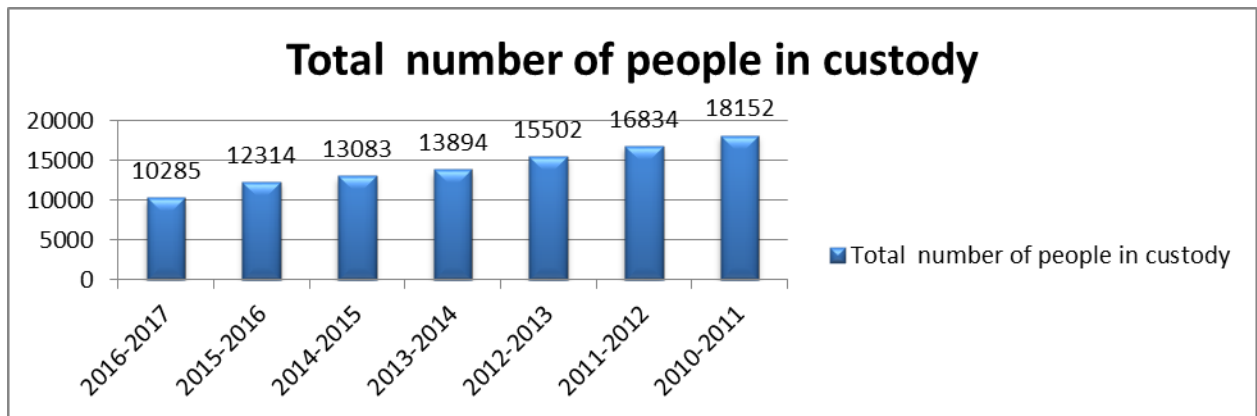


Annual Report of Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visiting Scheme 2016-17

This report details the activity of Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visiting Scheme from 01 April 2016 – 31 March 2017. During that time 10,285 people were arrested and detained in police custody in Bedfordshire, which is 2029 less than the previous year. 856 (8.3%) of those detainees were in custody whilst an Independent Custody Visit was carried out.

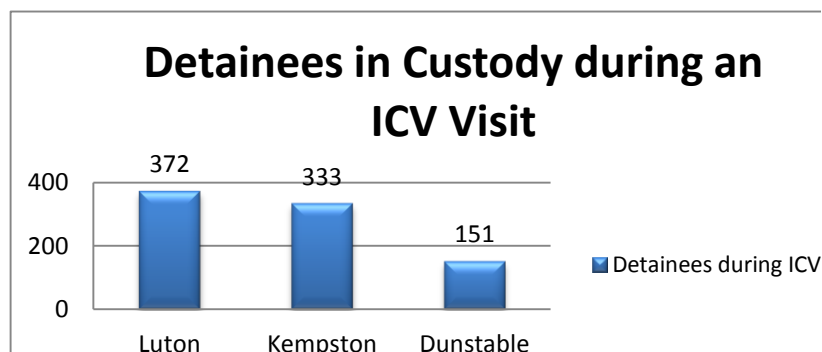
Comparison with previous years:

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 856 detainees in custody whilst a visit was taking place:

- 333 were at the Kempston Custody Suite
- 372 were at Luton Custody Suite
- 151 were at Dunstable Custody Suite



Visits

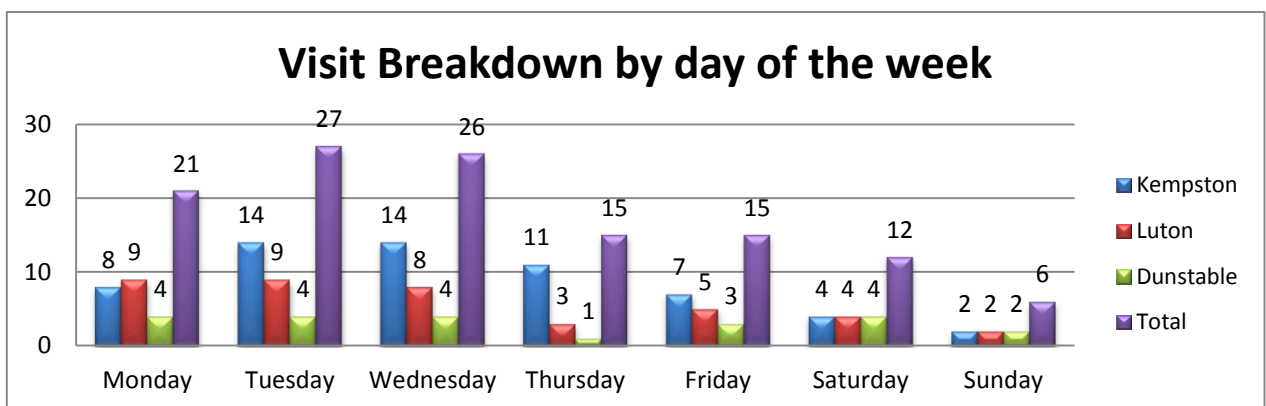
ICVs arrange their visits through the Volunteer Scheme Co-ordinator Mark Mason and are reminded to arrange visits over all days of the week and times of the day.

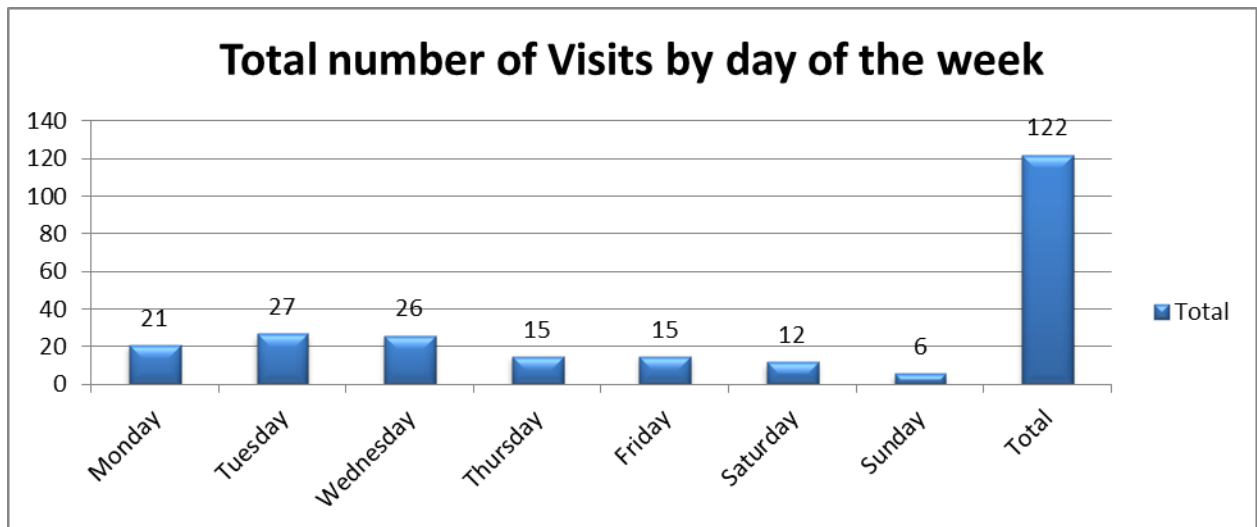
For more information on all visits carried out from 01 April 2016 – 31 March 2017 please refer to the table below.

VISITS

The table below details visits undertaken by ICVs, including days of the week and times of the day, from 01 April 2016 – 31 March 2017.

Custody Visits 01 April 2016 – 31 March 2017											
	Number of visits	Day of week							Time		Other
Custody Suite	Visits carried out	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	6am - 6pm	6pm - 6am	Abandoned Visits
Kempston	60	8	14	14	11	7	4	2	34	24	2
%	49%	13%	23%	23%	18%	12%	7%	4%	57%	40%	3%
Luton	40	9	9	8	3	5	4	2	19	18	3
%	33%	22%	22%	20%	8%	13%	10%	5%	48%	45%	7%
Dunstable	22	4	4	4	1	3	4	2	15	7	0
%	18%	18%	18%	18%	5%	14%	18%	9%	68%	32%	0%
Total	122	21	27	26	15	15	12	6	68	49	5
%	100%	17%	23%	21%	12%	12%	10%	5%	56%	40%	4%





Outcomes of Visits

Of the 856 people in custody when visits were undertaken from 01 April 2016 – 31 March 2017, 660 (77%) were interviewed and 196 (23%) were not visited for reasons such as the detainees were being interviewed, bailed before the visit officially started, advised not to conduct visit due to detainee being aggressive, detainees declined visit or detainees were taken to hospital.

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

Detainees Capable of Consent

Para. 65 of the Codes of Practice/ National Standards refer to the term “Incapable”: The ordinary meaning of the word applies - incapable concerns the person’s capacity to make an informed decision as to whether they want to allow their custody record to be inspected by the ICVs at the point at which they would be asked for their consent. This will ensure that the welfare of persons who fall into the following categories can be monitored by ICVs; those who are drunk or under the influence of drugs, those who do not speak any English, and those who display mental health concerns.

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 major issues were forwarded to the Inspector and Chief Inspector of the custody suite and have been rectified.

ICVs check all areas of custody including cells, kitchen areas, interview rooms, store cupboards, medical rooms, corridors, shower and toilet facilities etc.

ICVs should have immediate access to custody but it is accepted that a short wait might be acceptable for certain reasons such as 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 attention 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 manner and rectified.

The Inspector of Custody values the ICV scheme and has named the visitors his critical friends, ICVs have carried out their duties in an efficient and sensitive manner, holding the Chief Constable to account in regards to Custody.

Comments About Custody Staff

Overall, ICVs rated the professionalism and conduct 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 2016-17. 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.

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 Compliance Officer. 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.

Scheme Volunteer Co-ordinator

Bedfordshire Independent Custody Scheme has a new appointed Scheme Co-ordinator Mark Mason, who was appointed in 2016.

The Coordinator is appointed on a two yearly cycle, who works to oversee all visits to ensure they are carried out and monitors that all ICVs are meeting their target of 6 - 12 visits per year. They work closely with the Scheme Administrator to ensure that the scheme runs as smoothly as possible and has responsibility to mentor new recruits. The co-ordinator role is considered of great value by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Retention and Recruitment

This year we have sad farewell to three of our Independent Custody Visitors. The Police and Crime Commissioner would like to thank them for their commitment and wish them well for the future.

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 has been appointed the Eastern Regional Lead and will be working 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.

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 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.

The success of the Bedfordshire Scheme is due to the commitment and dedication of the ICVs and the professional working relationship that has developed between the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Custody.

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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