



# Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Annual Report 2012-13

## 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 deputised responsibility for the Scheme to his Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner Tafheen Sharif who is now the Chair of the Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visiting Panel.

## Bedfordshire Custody Visitors 2013

Bedfordshire has an effective and efficient scheme of 32 dedicated 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. The Scheme has been monitoring recommendations of HMIC/HMIP Inspections and is pleased that CCTV has finally been installed within the custody units.

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 have been no disabilities declared by Custody Visitors.

Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visitors Diversity Data 2012-13								
Gender			Age			Ethnicity		
Female	13	41%	18-30	4	12%	White	25	79%
Male	19	59%	31-45	5	16%	Mixed	0	0%
			46-60	5	16%	Asian/Asian British	2	6%
			61-75	16	50%	Black/Black British	4	12%
			75+	2	6%	Chinese/Other	1	3%

### Annual Report of Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visiting Scheme 2012-13.

This report details the activity of Bedfordshire Independent Custody Visiting Scheme from 1 April 2012 – 31 March 2013. During that time 15022 people were arrested and detained in police custody in Bedfordshire. 808 (5.3%) of those detainees were in custody whilst an independent custody visit was carried out.

#### Comparison with previous years:

2011-12 16834 people in custody	857 (5.1%) in custody when custody visit took place
2010-11 18152 people in custody	870 (4.8%) in custody when custody visit took place
2009-10 17978 people in custody	955 (5.3%) in custody when custody visit took place

Of the 808 detainees in custody whilst a visit was taking place 273 were at Bedford, 95 at Dunstable and 440 at Luton Custody Suites.

### Visits against targets

129 visits were carried out against a target of 144 (90%). This is an improvement of 5% on 2011-12. The reasons for the shortfall were varied but have been partly attributed to a reduction in the frequency of panel meetings since 2011, where Custody Visitors traditionally have arranged their visits with colleagues. Panel meetings are to be reinstated to four times per year from April 2013 and the situation will be monitored. 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 2012 – 31 March 2013 refer to the table overleaf.

## VISITS

The table below details visits undertaken by Custody Visitors against targets, including days of the week and times of day, from 1 April 2012 – 31 March 2013.

Custody Visits 1 April 2012 – 31 March 2013											
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	52	9	12	11	9	3	3	5	33	19
%	100	108	17	23	21	17	6	6	10	63	37
Dunstable*	36	30	4	3	9	1	5	7	1	20	10
%	100	83	13	10	30	3	17	23	3	67	33
Luton	60	47	11	9	5	8	4	7	3	36	11
%	100	78	23	19	11	17	9	15	6	77	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>40</b>
%	100	90	19	19	19	14	9	13	7	69	31

\*Dunstable Police Station has not been regularly used for the detention of persons in police custody following the change to the new Bedfordshire Policing Model in October 2012 and therefore regular custody visits have ceased at this facility. Dunstable will be visited on an appointment only basis to ensure the facility is kept ready for use if required. The target figures have been adjusted to reflect this change.

## Outcomes of visits

Of the 808 people in custody when visits were undertaken from 1 April 2012 – 31 March 2013, 619 (77%) were interviewed and 189 (23%) were not visited for reasons as detailed in the table below.

Custody records of detainees incapable of giving their verbal permission because were checked to provide reassurance to Custody Visitors.

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

Unavailable for Custody Visit 2012-13	Bedford	Dunstable	Luton	No.	% of 808
In interview/being processed	33	12	56	101	12.5
Declined interview	5	2	9	16	2.0
Detainee asleep	2	3	4	9	1.1
Detainee aggressive/violent	8	0	5	13	1.6
With doctor/medic/at hospital	2	0	7	9	1.1
Unwell – not seen	1	0	2	1	0.1
Not seen- no reason given	0	0	0	2	0.2
Failed visit	0	0	15	15	1.9
Released/transferred during visit	5	1	17	23	2.8

## 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 custody visits during 2012-13 detainees were able to raise a number of

concerns/requests with Custody Visitors, the highest number of requests being for: 1) a phone call/have someone informed of their detention, 2) food or drink and 3) a blanket or extra blanket. A full list of issues and concerns raised by detained persons during a conversation with Custody Visitors can be found in the table below.

### 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 left in yard for excessive time	1
complained of being cold	11
complained staff slow to respond to buzzer	2
had concern regarding child/dependent	9
had concern regarding pets	2
had concern regarding their medical condition/medication	24
requested an appropriate adult	1
requested blanket	21
requested cell change due to smell	1
requested copy of rights	3
requested exercise	9
requested food and/or drink	34
requested hygiene pack	1
requested nicotine lozenge/cigarette	6
requested reading material	8
requested shower	6
requested solicitor	15
requested to clean teeth	3
requested to have someone informed	17
requested to make phone call	24
requested to see doctor/health care professional	8
requested toilet paper	7

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

### 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 poor standards of cleaning, maintenance issues and health and safety matters. All concerns reported can be found in the table overleaf.

The following issues and concerns were raised by Custody Visitors 1 April 2012 – 31 March 2013.

<b>Matters of concern- April 2012-March 2013</b>	<b>Bedford</b>	<b>Dunstable</b>	<b>Luton</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Health and Safety Concerns (36)</b>				
alarm strip not patched to HQ	1			1
alarm strip not working properly	1			1
electrical plugs in processing room	4			4
medical room equipment out of date	1	1	1	3
no slip hazard sign	1			1
self harm hazard		1		1
sharps box full	2		9	11
shower - flooding floor -slip hazard	6	1	2	9
toilet paper in empty cell	1	3	1	5
<b>Maintenance Issues (42)</b>				
cell doors require repainting		1		1
graffiti	2		4	6
light bulb needs replacing	1			1
problem with water supply to wash basin	6	1		6
stores door has no lock	3			3
toilet - not working properly/leaking	11	4	9	24
<b>Equipment (22)</b>				
chair in medical room worn- needs replacing			2	2
shower mat - not available	4		2	6
shower mat – dirty/poor condition	8	4	2	14
<b>Cleaning Issues (44)</b>				
cigarette ends/litter in yard	13	4	2	19
concern re. infection control	1			1
dirty cell	8		3	11
food fridge requires cleaning	1			1
kitchen dirty			2	2
microwave requires cleaning	1			1
poor cleaning (general)	2		1	3
shower - dirty	5			5
ventilation grill dirty	1			1
<b>Staffing Issues (17)</b>				
delay in starting visit - staff shortage			6	6
failed visit- staff shortage		2	1	3
shortage of staff	2	2	4	8
<b>Other (2)</b>				
waiting for Appropriate Adult - delay in processing detainee	1		1	2

Custody Visitors continue to record poor standards of cleanliness and maintenance issues, as has been the trend over recent years. The Force has changed its cleaning contract from May 2013 and Custody Visitors will monitor if standards improve. Exercise yards continue to be reported for having litter and cigarette ends in them. Custody Visitors reported long delays in some maintenance repairs within custody resulting in one issue being recorded repeatedly. There has been a significant decrease in the amount of graffiti reported in custody cells since last year.

Custody Visitors can 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.

One visit was abandoned due to staff shortage/changeover and Custody Visitors reported longer waits to begin their visits on several occasions since the introduction of the new policing model in October. This situation will be monitored. 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, visitors arriving at handover. Custody Visitors should always expect an explanation and can escalate a concern to the Duty Inspector if they feel it necessary.

### **Positive Comments**

Custody Visitors did report many positive comments about the professionalism and conduct of custody officers and staff (68) and about the cleanliness of custody areas (54)

### **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.

Diversity data collection was introduced in 2009 because of concern that the number of detainees declining a custody visit was high and varied considerably over the three custody suites and that this might correspond to an ethnicity/culture matter that needed to be addressed. In 2008-09 24% of detainees declined to be visited by Custody Visitors. Since the self introduction process was implemented in 2010 the number of detainees declining a visit has dropped to around 2% and reflects the detainee population.

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 2012-13.

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 808 persons in police custody whilst a custody visit was carried out can be found below.

### Diversity Data of Detainees 1 April 2012 – 31 March 2013

#### Gender

	Bedford	Dunstable	Luton	Total	%
Female	30	4	55	89	11.0
Male	241	91	363	695	86.0
Not Stated	2	0	22	24	3.0

#### Age

	Bedford	Dunstable	Luton	Total	%
Adult	242	85	388	715	88.5
Juvenile	25	10	30	65	8.0
Not Stated	6	0	22	28	3.5

#### Detainee Category

	Bedford	Dunstable	Luton	Total	%
PACE	202	67	370	639	79.1
HO Prisoner	17	1	8	26	3.2
Immigration	4	18	20	42	5.2
At Risk	7	1	2	10	1.2
Other	29	3	17	49	6.1
Not Stated	14	5	23	42	5.2

### Ethnicity (as defined by the detainee)

		Bedford		Dunstable		Luton		Total		
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	%
<b>ASIAN OR ASIAN BRITISH</b>										
<b>A1</b>	Indian	9	3.3	7	7.4	17	4	33	4.1	15.6
<b>A2</b>	Pakistani	7	2.6	5	5.3	46	10.8	58	7.2	
<b>A3</b>	Bangladeshi	1	0.4	4	4.2	15	3.5	20	2.5	
<b>A9</b>	Asian Other	3	1.1	1	1.1	11	2.6	15	1.9	
<b>BLACK OR BLACK BRITISH</b>										
<b>B1</b>	Caribbean	23	8.4	6	6.3	26	6.1	55	6.8	12.3
<b>B2</b>	African	7	2.6	6	6.3	18	4.2	31	3.8	
<b>B9</b>	Black other	1	0.4	1	1.1	11	2.6	13	1.6	
<b>MIXED</b>										
<b>M1</b>	White and Black Caribbean	11	4.0	1	1.1	4	0.9	16	2.0	3.1
<b>M2</b>	White and Black African	3	1.1	0	0.0	1	0.2	4	0.5	
<b>M3</b>	White and Asian	2	0.7	0	0.0	0	0	2	0.2	
<b>M9</b>	Mixed other	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	0.7	3	0.4	
<b>CHINESE AND OTHER ETHNIC GROUP</b>										
<b>O1</b>	Chinese	1	0.4	0	0.0	1	0.2	2	0.2	1.9
<b>O9</b>	Other Ethnic group	1	0.4	7	7.4	5	1.2	13	1.6	
<b>WHITE</b>										
<b>W1</b>	British	173	63.4	41	43.2	208	48.9	422	52.2	62.9
<b>W2</b>	Irish	0	0.0	0	0.0	7	1.6	7	0.9	
<b>W9</b>	Other	26	9.5	8	8.4	45	10.6	79	9.8	
<b>NS</b>	Not stated	5	1.8	8	8.4	22	1.6	35	4.3	

### Panel meetings

All Custody Visitors are invited to attend panel meetings where matters discussed include performance monitoring of the scheme, national and regional update information and updates from Bedfordshire Police Custody.

Panel meetings had been reduced to two per year from 2011 due to the austerity measures by the Police Authority. Custody Visitors expressed their displeasure that two meetings per year was not sufficient and asked for them to be increased back to four per year. They expressed that the panel meetings were important for the following reasons:-

- Allow them to keep up to date on local and regional matters;
- opportunities for training/refresher training;
- meeting up with peers/networking;
- feeling valued within the organisation;
- arranging visits

Custody Visitors agreed to no longer have a buffet prior to panel meetings to support the cut backs in police funding. From April 2013 panel meetings will take place four times per year.



## **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**

1. The Chair of the Panel and Custody Visitors continue 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.
2. Custody Visitors continue to sit on the Custody Forum (Partners) where they work with Criminal Justice Partners on the processes and delivery of the criminal justice system around custody.
3. 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**

Eight Custody Visitors had attended the Eastern Region ICV Conference in July 2012 at Chelmsford and three had attended the ICVA National Conference in Bristol in October. Both events had been informative and presentation notes from each were made available for all Custody Visitors.

It is planned that refresher training/updates will resume on the agenda now that panel meetings are increased to four per year.

## **Retention and Recruitment**

Several Custody Visitors resigned from the Bedfordshire Scheme in year 2012-13 for a variety of reasons and each was thanked for their contribution to the scheme and wished the best for the future. One new Custody visitor has transferred from the Metropolitan Custody Visiting Scheme.

Custody Visitors are required to visit 6 -12 times per year. The closure of Dunstable Custody suite has meant that the requirement for the number of Custody Visitors has dropped by just under one third. On current numbers Custody Visitors are required to

each carry out 6-7 visits per year to meet agreed targets. There are no plans to recruit Custody Visitors in the near future.

## **Review of the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme**

In 2013 -14 the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme will be reviewed to ensure that it is compliant to new Codes of Practice issued by the Home Office and ICVA National Standards (currently out for consultation). The scheme targets and processes will also be revised. The Hand Book will be revised in line with new guidance. The Commissioner's website is also to be revised and the Custody Visiting Scheme should then be provided with its own page(s).

## **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. Custody visiting records provide 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 Police and Crime Commissioner in developing a 'Confident Communities Strategy' and the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme will sit within this as 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 hard work.

### **Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire**

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