



INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING SCHEME

What is Independent Custody Visiting?

Independent Custody Visiting is a well-established scheme whereby volunteers attend police custody units 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 provides reassurance to the wider community.

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire has a statutory duty to deliver independent custody visiting across his policing area.

Independent Custody Visitors come from all walks of life and sections of the community.

Bedfordshire currently has about 30 Independent Custody Visitors.

Bedfordshire Custody suites are visited 4-5 times per month.

Who can become an Independent Custody Visitor?

Anyone over 18 years of age can become an Independent Custody Visitor except magistrates, those who have been convicted of an offence punishable by imprisonment within the last five years and serving and former Police Officers.

How can you become an Independent Custody Visitor?

Further information and application packs are available from the Scheme Administrator – address below.

How are Independent Custody Visitors selected and trained?

Successful applicants will be invited to attend an interview and if successful will be appointed subject to security vetting clearance. Those appointed will be issued with an identity card which must be carried on all visits.

When and where will visits be made?

The actual timing and frequency of visits is entirely a matter for Independent Custody Visitors, although it is expected that each will carry out 6 -12 visits per year. Visits are always arranged through the Scheme Co-ordinator.

There are special circumstances when a visit may be requested by a Senior Police Officer to alleviate concern and anxiety by the community with regard to a particular arrest.

Custody Suites in Bedfordshire are at:

- Police HQ, Woburn Road, Kempston
- Luton Police Station, Buxton Road, Luton

What happens during a visit?

When two Independent Custody Visitors arrive at a Police Station they will be given immediate access to the Custody Suite. A Custody Officer will supply details of detainees in custody. Independent Custody Visitors will introduce themselves to each detainee, and if consent is given, enquire on the welfare of that detainee. Independent Custody Visitors also check on the condition of the entire Custody Suite including cleanliness and supplies. Any matters of serious concern should be immediately addressed to the Custody Sergeant or Duty Inspector. A report is then completed on the entire visit.

It is expected of Independent Custody Visitors that-

- Independent Custody Visitors will not interest themselves in the legal or evidential aspects of whatever matter has brought an individual into custody.
- An interview will not be interrupted or delayed to give access to a detainee.
- Independent Custody Visitors may be refused access to an individual for their own safety or if it is thought that a visit might prejudice an important investigation.
- Independent Custody Visitors must treat as confidential all details of what is seen and heard whilst carrying out their responsibilities.

Are there any risks?

The duties of an Independent Custody Visitor may sometimes be unpleasant but Independent Custody Visitors should not be subject to danger at any time. Interviews with detainees are carried out within the close proximity of a Custody Officer and visits will be refused for detainees who are deemed a health and safety risk. The Custody Officer should be within sight but out of hearing where possible during an interview with a detainee.

Is there a lot of paperwork?

Independent Custody Visitors are required to complete a standard report form for every visit made. A copy of the report is left at the Police Station and two copies are posted to the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Any matters of concern in the reports are forwarded to Senior Police Officers to be addressed. Independent Custody Visitors are expected to attend Panel Meetings which are held four times a year.

The appointment of Independent Custody Visitors

The tenure of appointment is 3 years following a 6 month probationary period.

Although the work is voluntary the Police and Crime Commissioner has the right to terminate an Independent Custody Visitor appointment at any time if the conduct of that Independent Custody Visitor is not of the required standard, or if the requirement of 8 – 12 visits per year is not being met.

Whilst Independent Custody Visitors are not paid for the work they undertake, all out of pocket expenses are reimbursed.

If you require information on how to become an Independent Custody Visitor, please contact:

ICV Scheme Administrator
Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
Bedfordshire Police Headquarters, Woburn Road
Kempston, Bedfordshire MK43 9AX
Tel: 01234 842066
PCC@bedfordshire.pnn.police.uk
www.bedfordshire.pcc.police.uk

