

— **David Lloyd** —
**Police and Crime
Commissioner**
for Hertfordshire

**INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITORS
SCHEME**

**ANNUAL REPORT
2016 – 2017**

Hertfordshire Independent Custody Visiting Scheme
Annual Report 2016-2017

Introduction by David Lloyd, Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire

Welcome to the Annual Report of Hertfordshire's Independent Custody Visitors (ICV) Scheme. This report will outline the scheme, look at the volunteers and focus on the visits made from 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017.

I have had statutory responsibility for custody visiting since November 2012. The Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) have enabled me to fulfil this responsibility to ensure that the wellbeing of detainees is monitored and issues relating to detainees or the custody suites are addressed. Their role is to increase public confidence in the custody service and increase transparency. Our ICVs are all volunteers and I would like to thank them for the excellent work they do in checking the welfare of detainees.

We have two custody suites in Hertfordshire located in Hatfield and Stevenage. The volunteers visit the suites unannounced at least twice a week, during day or night, to introduce themselves to detainees to check on their health and wellbeing and that their rights and entitlements are upheld. I am pleased to report that no serious issues were reported this year.

The focus in the past year has been on inducting our newly recruited volunteers and providing additional training for our existing ICVs to enhance their role and to assist me in ensuring that issues raised by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and the Independent Police Complaints Commission are addressed. We have an excellent custody service in Hertfordshire and our ICVs play a key role in ensuring that we maintain the highest possible standards of welfare for our detainees.

David Lloyd

Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire

Overview of the scheme

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.

David Lloyd, the Police and Crime Commissioner, is responsible for the operation of the scheme in Hertfordshire. He appoints a Scheme Administrator from within his office that is responsible for recruiting and training volunteers as well as managing the scheme.

ICVs are unpaid volunteers who live or work in Hertfordshire. Currently there are 56 ICVs from across the county. They are trained to introduce themselves to people in custody to ensure that their treatment is fair and that they have access to their rights and entitlements. During each visit a visitor report form is produced by the visitors and forwarded to the Commissioner's Scheme Administrator with a copy being left with the Custody Managers 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

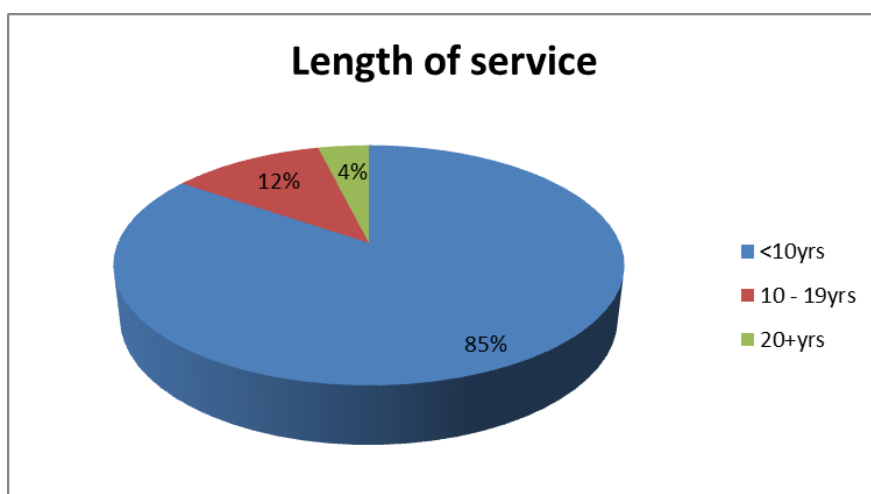
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Chief Inspector in their monthly meetings. The visitors will also have a chance to raise general concerns and matters arising from visits during the six monthly meetings. In addition, regular training sessions are held . Over the year this has included developing our ICVs through Mental Health training , disability and autism awareness and juveniles in custody training. During this year Barbara Funnell one of our ICVs received her long service award for 10 years continuous ICV volunteering

Independent Custody Visitors

There are a total of 56 Independent Custody Visitors who live or work in Hertfordshire, 32 male volunteers and 24 female volunteers.

The pie chart below shows the length of service for our ICVs. The number of volunteers with 20+ years' service has decreased as some of our longstanding volunteers have now retired. The majority of our ICVs have been volunteering for the scheme for less than ten years.



Visits made by ICVs

From April 2016 to March 2017, Independent Custody Visitors made a total of 153 visits to custody suites. All visits are unannounced and the ICVs had the opportunity to see all the detainees, depending on availability and consent of the detainee. At the time of the visits a total of 1695 persons were detained of which 907 were visited.

Below is a breakdown of the visits from 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017

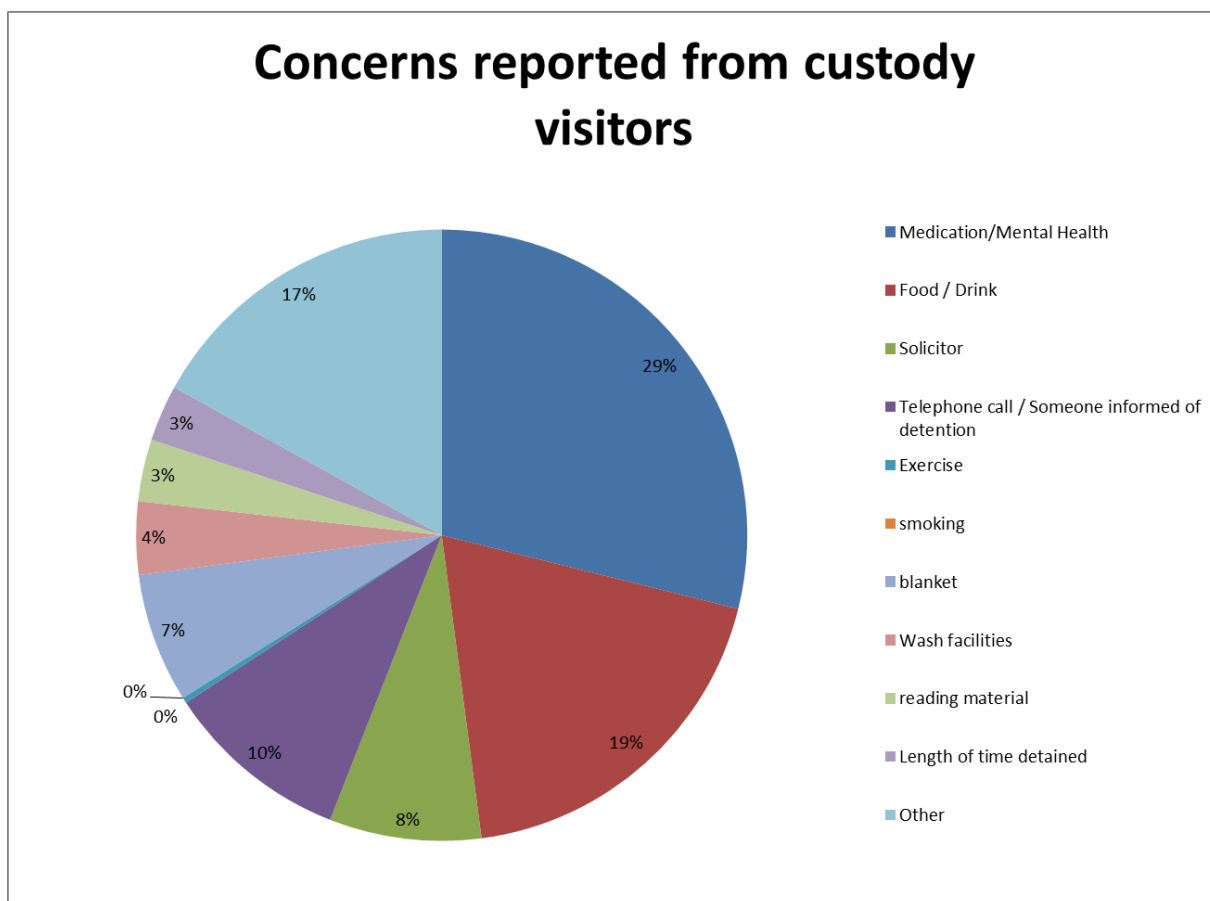
Custody Suite Visited	No. of Visits Undertaken	No. of detained persons held	No. of detainees available to visit	No. of detained persons visited	% of detainees visited (of those available)	No. of detained persons not visited
Hatfield	75	940	547	500	91.4%	440
Stevenage	78	755	440	407	92.5%	348
TOTAL	153	1695	955	907	95.0%	788

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Not all detainees were available or consented to being interviewed by an ICV during a visit. This is due to a number of reasons including when detainees are asleep, intoxicated, violent, in an interview or providing fingerprint/DNA evidence. This year a total of 708 detainees were not available to be visited. This year 80 detainees refused to be interviewed by an ICV.

Issues reported from custody visits

Throughout the duration of the year visitors raised 336 concerns with custody staff. **57 (17%)** of these came under the category of other and included within this category are issues relating to refused visits, at interview, being discharged, asleep. **97 (28.9%)** were related to medical or mental health issues. **33 (9.8%)** were requests for phone calls or to inform someone of their detention and **64 (19%)** were requests for food.



In **14 (9.6%)** of the visits there were no detainee concerns. ICVs also recorded 10 positive comments during the year.

During the year ICVs reported issues with facilities. In total **26** issues were recorded, **17 (65%)** related to cleanliness, **6 (23%)** to equipment faults and **1 (4%)** to cells being out of action

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ICV Scheme Costs

Although visitors are unpaid, they are reimbursed for travel and subsistence costs. As well as these costs the Commissioner continues, as in previous years, to incur other minimal costs for running the scheme such as training costs, printing costs, catering for panel meetings, conference booking fee etc.

Comments from the Head of Hertfordshire Constabulary's Custody Units

I was honoured to be appointed as the Head of Custody for Hertfordshire Constabulary in May 2016.

Police Custody is a fundamental element of policing and it remains of significant national interest. Recent developments in the service's approach to topics such as mental health and children in custody and the current Independent Review on Deaths and Serious Incidents in Police Custody have served to maintain the high profile nature of this essential activity.

Custody remains one of the highest risk and most challenging areas of policing - with significant risk and expectations being placed upon Custody Officers, Detention Officers and PACE Inspectors on a daily basis. We are charged with the responsibility of looking after arguably our most chaotic, unpredictable and vulnerable individuals in society.

Our aim is to deliver a consistent and transparent custody operation that is safe, effective and efficient. The ICV volunteers' role is to ensure the Constabulary is delivering upon that aim and thereby reinforcing the already strong public confidence in its local police force.

There is much to reflect on over the last 12 months, which has seen significant change affecting Hertfordshire Custody.

April 2016, saw the introduction of a Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire (BCH) Collaborated Custody and Criminal Justice Senior Management Team. This was the first step following the decision to collaborate the Custody function across the tri-force.

The decision to collaborate Custody involved staff and public engagement, benchmarking against other police forces and reviewing national policies, procedures, guidance and legislation. We have sought input from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP).

March 2017 saw a further significant step towards full collaboration of the Custody function across Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire with the introduction of new shift pattern and resilient resourcing model. Significant energy continues in the work to align consistent, efficient policies and process across the counties.

The work of the ICV's is highly important and I have worked closely with the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office this year to help promote further the status and impact of the Independent Custody Visitors Scheme in Hertfordshire.

I welcome and value the work of the ICV volunteers; independently visiting Stevenage and Hatfield Custody suites to check on the treatment of detainees and the conditions in which they are held and

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that their rights and entitlements are being observed. The inspections and subsequent feedback - more important than ever following significant change, helps inform and reassure me that we remain effective, efficient and legitimate.

We continue to focus on HMIC / HMIP visits across the country – identifying best practice and together with the introduction of The National Custody Strategy will look to target ICV visits in the future to support strategy and deliver improvements to custody services.

I would like to thank all of the ICV Volunteers for their outstanding effort last year, and look forward to working with you in the forthcoming year.

Mike Todd Chief Inspector

Future of ICV

Hertfordshire's ICV scheme has undergone a period of significant change with new volunteers joining the team, a new and more comprehensive training package being delivered and new reporting processes. The Independent Visiting Scheme Association (ICVA) have recently restructured and appointed a new Chief Executive who is working closely with the Home Office to develop and enhance the scheme nationally. Hertfordshire is at the forefront of those developments, helping to inform and shape the future direction of the scheme.

Alongside this the custody teams have also been undergoing a period of significant change meaning that regular and independent visitors are more important than ever. As discussed above, we have been using reports from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) and the Independent Police Complaints Commission to target our ICV inspections and use this as a real driver for improvements in our custody services. We intend to continue to develop this targeted inspection process and to improve our reporting mechanisms to further enable the Commissioner to hold the Chief Constable to account.

Hertfordshire hosts Eastern Region Independent Custody Visitor Conference in 2017

The Eastern Region Independent Custody Visitor conference was held at the Hertfordshire Constabulary Headquarters in Welwyn Garden City on Saturday, March 4th 2017.

This annual event was organised to educate ICVs on recent developments and changes around police custody and was attended by volunteers from Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk.

An experienced and varied panel of speakers covered a wide range of topical subjects that are at the forefront of how custody suites are evolving.

Speakers included the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire, David Lloyd, who said: "Our community measures us by how we look after the most vulnerable in our care. I am proud of the ICVs we have in place and I thank them for the brilliant work they are doing, particularly looking out for our youth and those who have mental health problems."

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ACC Owen Weatherill said: “Police Custody is evolving and becoming ever more professional. ICVs are an important link between the Police and the public – they broker a relationship which we can’t always do. Custody visits are not just about scrutiny – detainees may welcome an independent face for a chat.”

Sherry Ralph, Project Officer at the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) and speaker at the event said: “The Eastern ICV Conference was a great opportunity for ICVA to thank the custody visitors for their time and commitment to the role, and to share with them some of the challenges and changes that custody visiting and ICVA face.

It was a great day, and by attending I also managed to learn a great deal from some of the other speakers.”



Conclusion

Independent Custody Visitors are essential in enabling the Police and Crime Commissioner to fulfil his statutory responsibility to ensure that the welfare and rights of detained persons are upheld whilst in police custody. The ICV scheme provides independence, transparency and has increased the public’s confidence in the police service and we are very grateful to our volunteers for the time that they contribute to our community through their ICV role.

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If you are interested in becoming an Independent Custody Visitor please contact:

Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Administrator
Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
15 Vaughan Road
Harpenden
AL5 4GZ

Telephone: 01707 806100

Email: patrick.beynon@herts.pcc.pnn.gov.uk

For more information regarding the role of ICVs and that of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire, please visit www.hertscommissioner.org.

For more information on the role of the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA), please visit www.icva.org.uk