



Independent Custody Visiting Annual Report 2018-2019



Foreword

Since the introduction of an Independent Custody Visiting Scheme in Dorset, our volunteers have visited thousands of detainees to check on their welfare and the conditions in which they are being held whilst being detained within police custody.

This report details the invaluable work that the Independent Custody Visitors have carried out across Dorset from 1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019 and includes an overview of the year's visits, as well as more information about the Scheme in general.

The visits conducted over this year continue to confirm that custody suites within Dorset are a safe and caring environment for all detainees. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the custody officers and detention staff for their continued professionalism and dedication. Their role is not without challenges, but their treatment of detainees remains exemplary.

I am fortunate to be the Chair of the Independent Custody Visiting Association, which supports Commissioners, Scheme Managers and volunteers in the delivery of effective and efficient schemes. This past year has seen great changes in detention across the UK with amendments being made to PACE highlighting the importance of dignity within police detention.

Special thanks must also go to all Independent Custody Visitors, both past and present, who have carried out the role with a consistent enthusiasm and professionalism. It is their conscientiousness and commitment to the Scheme in Dorset that keeps it functioning at such a high level.



Martyn Underhill
Police and Crime Commissioner

Background

What is Independent Custody Visiting?

Independent Custody Visiting is a national initiative, supported by the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA), whereby trained members of the public make random and unannounced visits to custody suites to check on the welfare of detainees and the conditions they are being held in. Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) will ensure the detainees have received their legal rights and entitlements and, with permission from the detainee, will review the notes kept on their treatment during detention. ICVs are independent of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the police, and will have no direct involvement in the criminal justice system. Police and Crime Commissioners have responsibility for running and maintaining Independent Custody Visiting Schemes in their force area.

Each week a pair of ICVs will visit each of the 24-hour suites. On completion of each visit they compile a report outlining any comments or concerns they may have. This report is sent to both the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office and Dorset Police. Serious complaints are investigated by the Professional Standards Department of Dorset Police; other matters which can be resolved at the time of the visit are recorded on the report. The findings of these reports are discussed at quarterly meetings attended by all ICVs, the Police and Crime Commissioner, the OPCC's Scheme Manager, the Assistant Chief Constable, Dorset Police's Head of Criminal Justice and the Custody Liaison Officer.

Why is Independent Custody Visiting important?

Independent Custody Visiting provides protection to detainees and the police, and reassurance to the wider community. Volunteers from Independent Custody Visiting Schemes across the UK independently check on the welfare of detainees who may be feeling vulnerable or confused, providing independent scrutiny of their treatment and the conditions in which they are being held.

Independent Custody Visiting allows the police to demonstrate their commitment to transparency and provides public reassurance that policing in their area is fair and in accordance with statutory legislation and guidance.

Dorset Custody

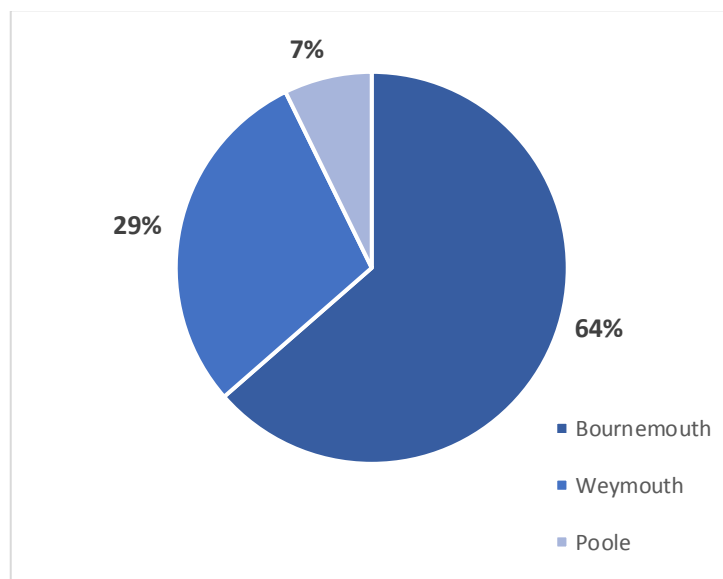
Estates

Dorset Police operates two 24-hour suites, one in Bournemouth and the other in Weymouth. A third custody suite is available in Poole. However, although this suite is always ready to be used, it is generally non-operational. Poole is usually opened when, due to operational need or other issues, such as building or maintenance work, one of the two suites is closed. Poole may also be opened and operated as a third suite during periods of high demand. The Scheme Manager is always informed of any movement away from the usual custody suites and this information is passed to visitors. When Poole is open ICVs are scheduled to carry out visits there as well.

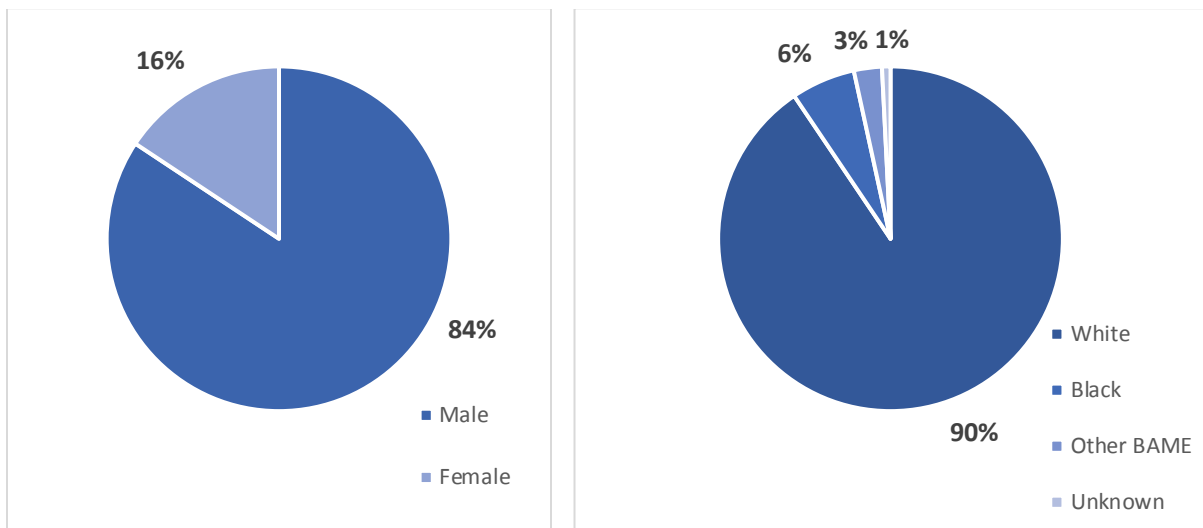


Detainees

Throughout 2018-19 approximately 10,000 people were detained across the three custody suites in Dorset. Bournemouth is the busiest of the three suites with 64% of detainees being held here. A breakdown by area can be seen below.



In 2018-19, 84% of all detainees held within police custody were male. In terms of ethnicity, 90% of those detained within Dorset identified as white, 6% identified as black, 3% from other BAME backgrounds and 1% were categorised as unknown.



Highlights

The custody team within Dorset manage complex detainees on a daily basis, making risk based decisions throughout each detention. The below shows only a handful of these instances.

A letter of praise was received by Dorset Police stating, *'I would like to thank police at the Weymouth Custody Suite for their kindness today. Sadly my son was arrested on a false allegation. But from start to end, through arrest through to interview, the kindness shown to my son and myself and husband was frankly nothing short of amazing, dignified and very, very kind. He was naturally released with no charges. But we all appreciated there was a job to be done. And what an exemplary way it was conducted. We all left exhausted and for me being mum very stressed. But we were treated amazing and I (we) wanted to thank you all.'*

Staff and officers within custody received a Divisional Commander's Commendation after an incident involving a drug overdose where the exceptional work of those individuals saved the life of a detainee. Drug overdoses and drug related illnesses are an ongoing concern for custody staff. Those working within custody have proven themselves to be calm, efficient and professional in the intervention of urgent medical attention time and time again, with a range of medical concerns.

Dorset Custody Staff have received praise this year from their Border Force counterparts, who appreciate the current demand within custody and expressed their gratitude to the team for their work with detainees resulting from Border Force arrests.

Dorset Custody experiences many fluctuations in the numbers of detainees held. One noteworthy example was during an investigation into an armed robbery, seven suspects were arrested on the same day after much planning and evidence gathering. This resulted in a very busy few days across the force, and greatly impacted on custody. The Senior Investigating Officer and several of the investigators have commented about how helpful everyone was in custody throughout this time, and expressed their thanks for the great team effort to support the force wide work. At the height of extreme demand across the force, there were 32 detainees in custody on the Sunday morning.

Dorset ICVs

Visiting Information

On average each suite within Dorset is visited once a week. Visitors will make unannounced visits in pairs, and must be admitted to the custody facility immediately upon their arrival.

During visits, detainees are given the opportunity to discuss their treatment whilst in custody. Visitors will check that detainees have been informed of their legal rights and that they understand them.

Visitors will also check that:

- Cells and toilets have been maintained
- Reasonable temperatures are maintained within the cells and suite
- Any medical attention or medication required has been provided
- Any visible injuries have been explained
- Washing facilities and access to fresh clothing has been provided
- The custody facility, food preparation areas and bedding are in a clean, tidy and hygienic condition
- The detainee is satisfied with their treatment in custody
- A reasonable period of time to rest has been given if detained overnight
- With the consent of the detainee, visitors check the custody log to confirm the detainee's account of their detention.

Visitors raise matters that require immediate attention with the Custody Sergeant at the time of the visit and complete a report as a record of each visit. Copies of the report are provided to the Custody Manager for Dorset Police and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. Subsequent queries arising from the reports are discussed and feedback provided at the Panel meeting, or before if the situation requires.

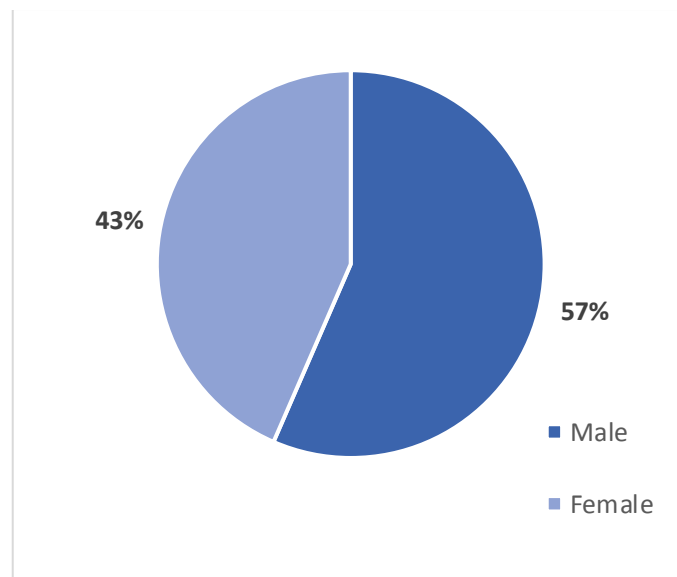
The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner provides visitors with two training days per year and also includes training as part of Panel meetings. In 2017-18, the training comprised:

- Induction (new starters only)
- Refresher
- Vulnerability
- Mental Health
- Report Writing
- Spit Hood/Guard Demonstration
- Religion in Custody
- Learning Disabilities and Autism
- Equality and Bias
- Assertiveness

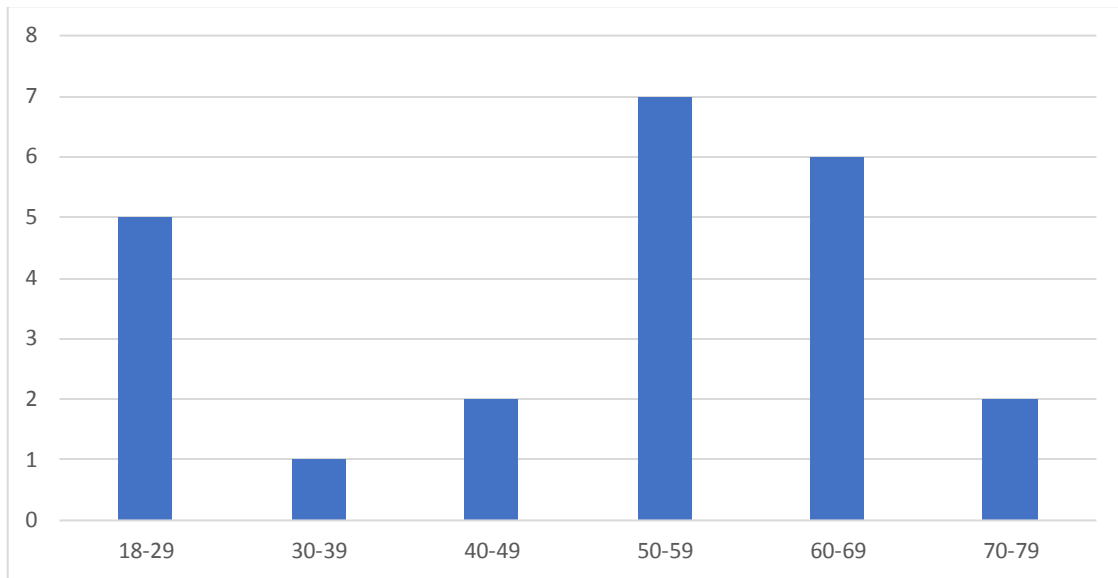


Volunteer Information

The OPCC recruited twice in 2018-19 for new ICVs. The first offering those on a waiting list an opportunity to apply. The second was a widely advertised recruitment campaign. This resulted in eight new visitors being appointed. To provide each new visitor with sufficient visits to fulfil the training requirement, start dates were staggered. This also helped ensure sufficient visits were allocated to accredited visitors. At the close of the financial year 2018-19, there were a total of 23 visitors in Dorset, comprising 13 male and 10 female volunteers.

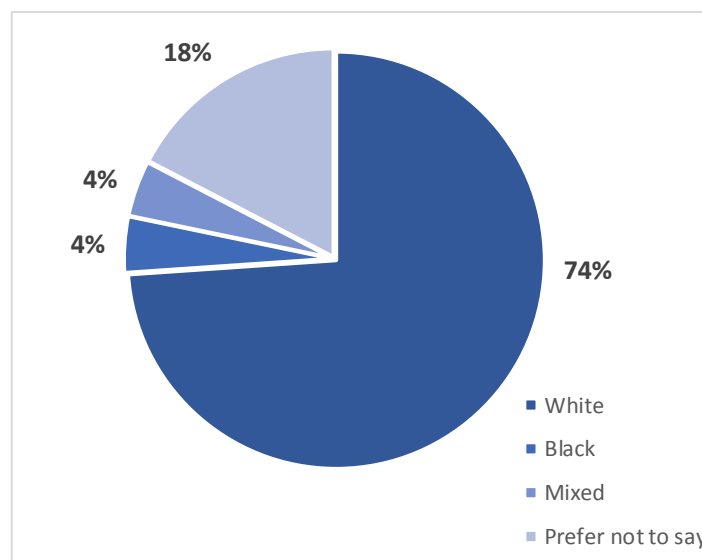


The average age of visitors in Dorset is 49. A detailed breakdown of the age demographics of Dorset ICVs is outlined in the bar chart below.



Targeted advertising to recruit younger people and reduce the average age of visitors took place in 2018-19 and the Scheme Manager proactively worked with Bournemouth University on this.

The average length of service, rounded to the nearest year, is three years and the longest serving visitor, who will step down from the team this year, has been with the Scheme for 10 years.



In Dorset 74% of visitors are white or white British, 4% are black or black British, 4% are from mixed race backgrounds and the remaining 17% chose not to provide this information.

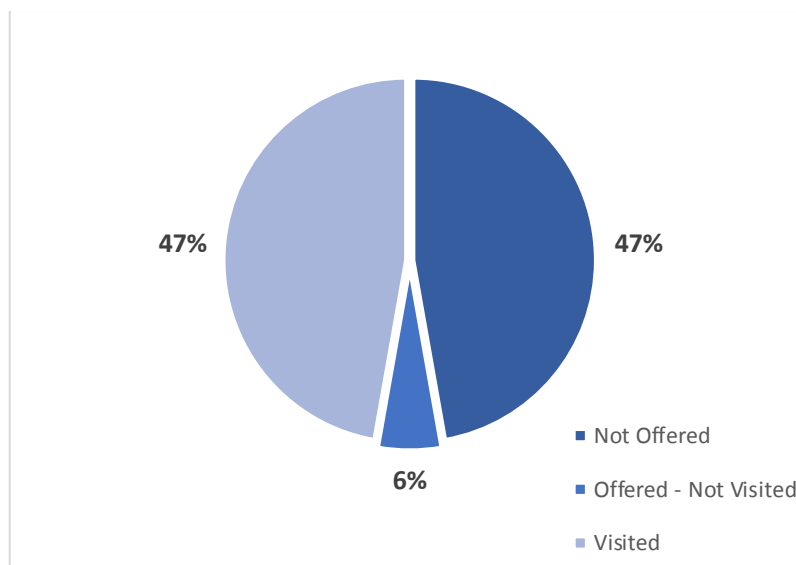
Visit Statistics

During the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019, a total of 105 visits were made to custody suites across Dorset. A breakdown of this can be seen in the table below.

	Bournemouth	Weymouth	Poole	Total
Number of Visits	52	46	7	105

Over the 105 visits made, a total of 417 detainees were offered a visit, and 373 of those detainees accepted and were spoken to by visitors. Detainees have a right to privacy and can refuse to speak with visitors. Detainees may also be asleep, being interviewed or processed when the visitors are in the suite. Over the last year, 47% of all those detained at the time of a visit were spoken to by visitors.

	Held	Offered	Visited
Number of Detainees	790	417	373



The credibility of the Scheme can be comprised if the visitors experience delays in gaining entry to the custody suites. The below table details the number of occasions delays have been experienced. A vast majority of visits saw access provided within five minutes, and only on five occasions had access been delayed. On four of those occasions visitors waited six minutes and an explanation had been provided. On one occasion, visitors waited 18 minutes to be admitted to the custody suite. Dorset Police were not responsible for this delay which had been caused by a misunderstanding regarding access arrangements.

	Number of Visits	%
Within 5 Mins	100	95%
Within 5-10 Mins	4	4%
Within 10-15 Mins	0	0%
Over 15 Mins	1	1%

The days of the week and times of the visits undertaken are shown below. In Dorset we continue to maintain a spread across the various days and times. Fewer visits are conducted between the hours of 9pm-6am as during these hours visitors may not be able to speak with many detainees as they will be asleep. However, visits during this time do provide the opportunity to conduct a thorough review of the conditions of the suite.

Days of the Week	Number of Visits
Monday	18
Tuesday	16
Wednesday	15
Thursday	16
Friday	19
Saturday	10
Sunday	11

Time of the day	Number of Visits
00:01 - 06:00	6
06:01 - 09:00	8
09:01 - 12:00	17
12:01 - 15:00	18
15:01 - 18:00	12
18:01 - 21:00	34
21:01 - 00:00	10

Key Developments

This year, Dorset OPCC opened recruitment to people who had expressed an interest in joining the Scheme. This allowed a less resource intensive recruitment process resulting in a quicker appointment process. A process we are keen to repeat dependent on the need and requirements of the Scheme.



ICVA released its Quality Assurance Framework (QAF). The QAF comprised a set of guidelines and criteria which enabled measurement of the performance each scheme. Dorset submitted evidence which was then peer assessed by another force area, and subsequently achieved the Gold Standard. The Dorset Scheme Manager peer assessed two other force areas.

This year saw the launch of the ICV awards within Dorset. This was an informal event hosted by the OPCC, looking to recognise the fantastic work of visitors and

encouraged positive feedback within the team. Awards ranged from ICV of the Year, to the ICV with the Best Smile, this was a fun and enjoyable event for all and visitors were enthusiastic to repeat this next year.

Following a requirement to review of the current ICV Handbook, the Scheme Manager organised a working group of visitors to work with her on amendments to bring the handbook up to date. The draft version is currently going through the approval process.

Key Issues

Key issues highlighted in 2018-2019 and the actions taken on them were as follows.

Appropriate Adult Provision – Visitors have expressed concerns to the PCC around the provision of Appropriate Adults across Dorset. Towards the end of 2018, the Chair of the ICV Panel wrote to the PCC outlining his concerns, the PCC discussed this and his own concerns with Dorset Police. Visitors noted an increasing trend in lengthy delays for Appropriate Adults attending as well as not being requested in the first instance. Whilst acknowledging that individual cases appear to be justified, the overall trend is one that concerned the Dorset visitors. The PCC has asked Dorset Police to conduct a review into the current provision to determine where improvements could be made and alternatives that could be considered.

Suite Temperature – ICVs have raised ongoing concerns around suite temperature during colder weather. This is primarily at Weymouth Custody Suite and, due to the age of the estate, has been challenging to overcome. Dorset Police have attempted several fixes, which included upgrading heating systems and introducing additional heaters into colder areas, unfortunately no permanent solution has been found. It has been agreed that cells where the problem impacts the most will not be used during colder weather. To prevent disruption, arrangements were made for CCTV cameras to be removed from those cells adversely impacted by the cold and installed into cells which are constantly operational. ICVs continue to monitor the effects of the temperature across all custody suites.

First Time in Custody Leaflet – ICVs highlighted that the First Time in Custody leaflet provided to detainees was only available in English. Dorset Police confirmed that there was provision to use Language Line to translate when required. Visitors felt that the leaflet should be a reference document enabling detainees to refer back to at any point in their detention for information, and a verbal translation took away that ability. Consequently, Dorset Police made arrangements for the leaflet to be translated into the 10 most common languages in Dorset.

TACT (Terrorism Act)

TACT detainees are those who have been arrested under the Terrorism Act (2000) and can be held in detention for up to 14 days pre charge. Under the revised Codes of Practice for custody visiting specially trained ICVs can visit TACT detainees. TACT detainees should be visited within the first 24 hours of their detention and continue to be visited daily until they are either charged or released.

The Independent Reviewer of Terrorist Legislation (IRTL) has a responsibility to Parliament on the operation of counter-terrorism law in the UK and all ICV reports relating to TACT detainees go through the IRTL.

TACT visitors must be 18 or over, live or work within the police area, have been resident in the UK for a minimum of three years and have completed a minimum of 18 months as an ICV. TACT visitors are also subject to a higher level of vetting.

In 2018-19 there were no TACT detainees held within custody suites in Dorset. However, Dorset OPCC ensures that there is a cadre of TACT trained visitors should they be required. Dorset currently has three TACT trained ICVs and a date is set to train an additional three ICVs.

The Future

In the coming year the OPCC plans to review the current induction process for new volunteers with a particular focus on mentoring. We are looking to formalise the current mentoring process, providing additional support and training to those in mentoring positions to ensure they feel fully supported and equipped to complete this role. This will ensure new ICVs are also appropriately supported in their development.

With a handful of our existing ICVs coming to the end of their tenure we will be looking to recruit more ICVs to join the team, and will be promoting the Scheme at the summer engagement events to ensure the visitors reflect the diverse population of Dorset.

We are continuing to explore digital reporting and how this could work in Dorset. It's not without its challenges as we have learnt from other OPCCs who have introduced it. As ever, the OPCC will do their best to overcome these challenges and find the best solution for the Dorset Scheme.

Further Information

Expressions of interest from members of the public to become Independent Custody Visitors are always welcome and the Commissioner's Office is keen to recruit volunteers from a wide spectrum of society to reflect the diverse communities in Dorset.

Volunteers must be 18 years of age, independent of the police and willing to carry out the role objectively and impartially.

Enquiries from members of the public interested in the Scheme should be directed to pcc@dorset.pnn.police.uk

Useful Links

Dorset OPCC

<https://www.dorset.pcc.police.uk/>

Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA)

www.icva.org.uk

Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation

<https://terrorismlegislationreviewer.independent.gov.uk/>

National Preventative Mechanism

<https://www.nationalpreventivemechanism.org.uk/>