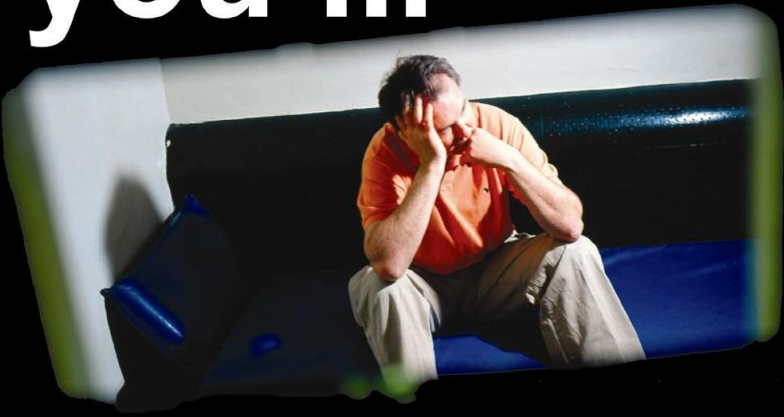




Independent Custody Visiting
Annual Report
2014-2015

**If this were
you ...**

A photograph of a man sitting on a sofa, looking distressed. He is wearing an orange shirt and khaki pants. His hands are pressed against his face, and he has a pained or frustrated expression. The sofa is blue and white. The background is dark.

**wouldn't you want
someone to check
on your welfare?**

Forward

Since the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme began in Dorset, volunteers have visited many thousands of detainees to check on their welfare whilst in police custody. This has been conducted in a caring and professional manner.

This year has seen the recruitment of 5 new volunteers and I hope they gain satisfaction from their important contribution to the Scheme. The Custody Visitors Scheme is now at full strength and the commitment by all the volunteers continues to be outstanding this year.

I would like to thank the custody officers and civilian detention staff for the open and transparent manner in which they carry out their responsibilities to how the detainees are treated when they find themselves in custody in Dorset.

Special thanks to all our ICVs who have carried out their roles with consistent enthusiasm throughout the year. Thanks entirely to their conscientiousness and commitment the Scheme in Dorset remains effective and healthy.



Martyn Underhill
Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner

What is Independent Custody Visiting?

Independent Custody Visiting is a well-established scheme run by the Dorset Police & Crime Commissioner's office whereby ordinary members of the public can visit police stations unannounced to check on the welfare of people detained in police custody and to see that they are being properly treated. Checks are also made to ensure the rights of those detained have been explained and that facilities to which they are entitled are available.

As the name suggests, Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) are independent of the Police and have no direct involvement in the criminal justice system.

Why is Independent Custody Visiting important?

Independent Custody visiting offers protection to detainees and the police, as well as reassurance to the community at large. It independently checks on the welfare of detainees at a time when they may be feeling vulnerable or confused. Any comments are sent to the Commissioner's Office and the Force and any serious complaints are investigated by the police professional standards department. Matters of a relatively minor nature may be resolved at the time by the Independent Custody Visitor.

Recently we said a fond farewell to Kathie Emery as she stepped down as Chair after reaching her maximum tenure and Dr Diane James was voted in as Chair of the Panel by her ICV colleagues with the role of Vice Chair to be decided at the Panel meeting in January 2016. Both the Chair and Vice-Chair are in regular contact with the Scheme Manager, Yvonne Fenwick, who has responsibility for the day-to-day management of the Scheme, including recruitment and organising training for visitors.

The Scheme holds quarterly meetings which are attended by Dorset's ICVs, the Police & Crime Commissioner, the OPCC's Chief Executive, the Assistant Chief Constable, Dorset Police's Head of Criminal Justice and the Custody Liaison Officer.

The current Police & Crime Commissioner, Martyn Underhill, has a very keen interest in the Custody Visiting Scheme and is Chair of the Management Board of the national body, Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA). Further information on ICVA can be found on their website www.icva.org.uk

During the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015 a total of 120 visits were carried out to Dorset Custody Suites by 20 ICVs. The Force operates two 24 hour suites at Bournemouth and Weymouth. On occasion due to operational need or other issues, such as building work, these two major suites will be closed and Poole custody will be brought into use.

	Weymouth	Bournemouth	Poole	Rural	Total
No of Visits	49	45	10	16	120

Detained persons have a right to privacy and are not obliged to speak with visitors. The detainee may also be asleep, being interviewed or processed.

Detainees:	Held	Offered	Visited/Seen
No:	725	489 (67%)	455 (93%)

Visitors always visit in pairs. Visits are unannounced and visitors must be admitted to the custody facility immediately on their arrival. The days and times visiting the facilities during the year are varied as shown below.

Day of Week	No of Visits
Monday	15
Tuesday	18
Wednesday	22
Thursday	22
Friday	18
Saturday	12
Sunday	13

Times of Visits*	No of Visits
From 1am – 7am	3
From 7am – 10pm	16
From 10am – 1pm	29
From 1pm – 4pm	26
From 4pm – 7pm	12
From 7pm – 10pm	12
From 10pm – 1am	6

* Times of visits – this only indicates visits made to 24 hour suites. Rural suites are only visited when the stations are open.

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



Visitors may also check that:

- Cells and toilets are maintained and that reasonable temperatures are maintained.
- Any medical attention or medication required is provided
- Any visible injuries are explained
- Washing facilities and access to fresh clothing has been provided where appropriate
- The custody facility, food preparation areas and bedding are in a clean, tidy and hygienic condition
- The detainee is satisfied with his/her treatment by the custody staff
- A reasonable period of time to rest has been given if detained overnight
- Visitors may normally, with the consent of the detainee, check the custody record to confirm the detainee's account of their detention.

Any matters requiring immediate attention are raised by Visitors with the Custody Sergeant before leaving the station. Records of the visits are made on a report and comments recorded. Copies of the report are provided to the Custody Liaison Officer and the Commissioner's office who scrutinise all reports.

Issues

ICVs continue to report incidents where there have been delays around the provision of Appropriate Adults. An Appropriate Adult is responsible for protecting (or 'safeguarding') the rights and welfare of a child or 'mentally vulnerable' adult who is either detained by police or is interviewed under caution voluntarily. The issues had been specifically around vulnerable adults with mental health problems and children, although this is not an issue that is the responsibility of Dorset Police.

The repeated reports from ICVs highlighting issues around the poor state of the custody facilities in Blandford have been fundamental in a decision to refurbish the suite to bring it up to the correct standard. ICVs have also been responsible for a decision to provide detainees with contact lens cases and solution, to make a charger available for mobile phones to allow contact numbers to be accessed for detainees and for detainees to be offered breakfast cereal rather than a pasty or sandwiches.

During 2014-2015 there have been a number of minor issues around the provision of showers and toilet roll but with the positive and professional co-operation of Dorset Police, and in particular the Custody staff, many of these issues had been immediately addressed.

Further Information

Applications from members of the public to become Independent Custody Visitors are always welcome and the Commissioner's office is anxious to recruit volunteers from as wide a spectrum of society to reflect the diverse communities in Dorset.

Certain people are excluded from consideration, for example, Magistrates, retired police officers and others with direct links to the Criminal Justice system. Volunteers must be 18 years of age and be seen to be independent of the police and carry out their task objectively and impartially.

Enquiries from members of the public interested in the Scheme should, in the first instance, contact Yvonne Fenwick at:

Police & Crime Commissioner's Office, Police Headquarters, WINFRITH NEWBURGH,
Dorset DT2 8DZ

Email: Yvonne.Fenwick@dorset.pnn.police.uk

Tel: 01305 229084