



NORFOLK POLICE AUTHORITY

Ensuring an Efficient and Effective Police Service



INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING SCHEME

ANNUAL REPORT 2009/10

Introduction

Welcome to the Annual Report of Norfolk's Independent Custody Visiting Scheme. This report covers the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010 and gives an overview of the Scheme. Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) are volunteers who support the commitment to provide assurance and improve confidence in respect of detained person's welfare.

Independent Custody Visitors attend local police stations unannounced and in pairs in order to check:



- the provision of rights and entitlements
- The treatment and wellbeing of people who are held at the facility
- The condition of the facilities

Organisation of the Scheme in Norfolk

As at 31 March 2010, there are 35 Independent Custody Visitors serving its Scheme across the county. There are five designated Panels ensuring visits are undertaken at all of Norfolk's custody facilities (Norwich, Great Yarmouth, North Walsham, Kings Lynn, Thetford and Dereham Police Stations).

Each Panel nominates from amongst its Independent Custody Visitors a “Co-ordinator”, whose responsibility it is to produce a rota of visits, as well as producing statistics relating to visits in their area which are monitored by the Police Authority.

The Custody Visiting Scheme seeks to be representative of our communities, including different ethnic origins, males and females and different age ranges. The appointment of new members to the Scheme takes account of the need to preserve and enhance this diversity.

The following table provides a breakdown of the age, gender and ethnicity of our current custody visitors: -

Norfolk Independent Custody Visitors data						Ethnic break-down of total population (Norfolk) <i>Source: ONS data 2007</i>
Gender:		Age:		Ethnic Group:		
Male	56%	18-30	12%	White	59%	95.98%
Female	44%	31-45	15%	Mixed Ethnicity	0%	1.00%
		46-60	26%	Asian or Asian British	0%	1.30%
		61-75	47%	Black or Black British	3%	0.79%
				Chinese or other ethnic group	0%	0.94%
				Not Stated (ICVs joined Scheme before ethnicity information was recorded)	38%	n/a



Issues reported from custody visits

No issues of serious harm or threat have been reported from visits undertaken throughout the past year. Custody Visitors have however highlighted issues in relation to the fabric of the building e.g. a blocked toilet, taps not working properly, Showerhead requiring de-scaling and graffiti in various locations. In all cases the Constabulary have responded immediately and satisfactorily addressed the matters.

The temperature within the new cells at Norwich was highlighted during December when the weather was particularly cold. Following investigation, it was noted that due to a design fault, heat wasn't being distributed appropriately. This was rectified by relevant engineers expeditiously.

Further to this, ICVs visiting Norwich highlighted that the entrance to the new cell block was quite low and could pose a health and safety risk. As a result, improvement works were undertaken to both heighten and widen the entrance therefore ensuring individuals could move effectively and the risk was negated.

In addition, as a result of conversations with detainees, custody visitors have recorded the following requests which were raised with custody staff and subsequently dealt with:

- 4 for blankets
- 9 for refreshments
- 4 to see a solicitor
- 8 to make a phone call or have someone informed
- 7 to see a doctor or receive medication
- 3 for washing facilities
- 2 for exercise
- 2 for reading material

The Authority is pleased that the continuing visits to all of the police stations across Norfolk indicate that the treatment of detained persons in custody is fair and in accordance with the rules outlined in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (referred to as PACE).

Visiting Statistics

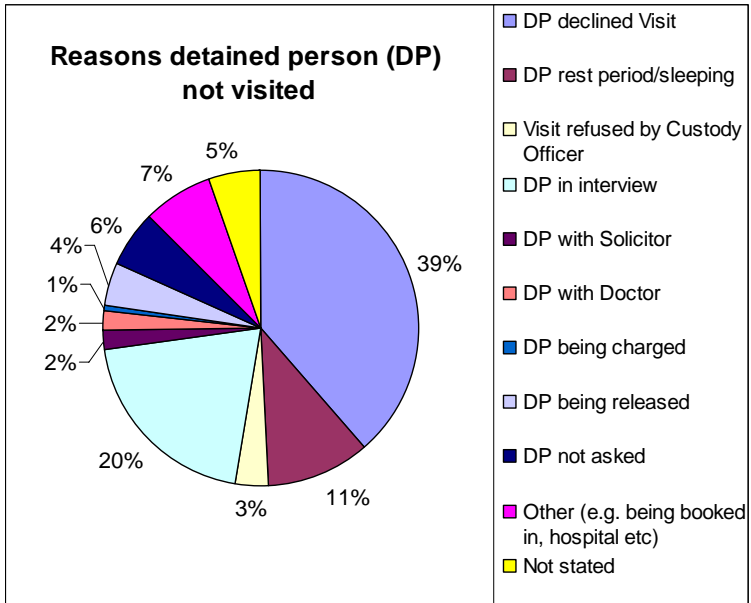
During the period covered a total of 238 visits were made. 951 persons were detained in custody at the time visits were conducted and 404 of these were visited. This included 48 juveniles (people aged below 17 years). Detained persons are not obliged to speak with Visitors and have the right to decline a visit.

Overall, the number of detained persons visited annually compared to those in custody at the time is approximately 42% (compared to 48% in the same period during the year 2008/09); albeit it is acknowledged that there are variations for the stations visited. More detail is provided in the table below:

Breakdown of visits conducted for the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010

Police station visited	No. of visits	No. of detained persons held	No. of detained persons visited	% detainees visited	No. of Juveniles visited	No. of detained persons not visited*
Norwich	45	400	157	39%	16	243
Great Yarmouth	46	175	97	55%	15	78
North Walsham	48	61	38	62%	3	23
King's Lynn	51	207	76	37%	9	131
Thetford	46	108	36	33%	5	72
Dereham	2	0	0	n/a	0	0
Overall Total	238	951	404	42%	48	547

***Note:** There are a number of reasons why detained persons are not visited; in addition to refusal or that the individual is either being interviewed or providing fingerprint/DNA evidence. The following pie chart provides an illustrative breakdown of the reasons ICVs did not see detainees during the period:



Highlights and achievements of 2009/10

In December 2009, custody visitors were provided with additional languages for their ‘flash cards’ as a result of regional collaboration. This has enabled ICVs to increased access to detainees who are unable to speak English and satisfy themselves that everything is in order. Whilst ‘flash cards’ should not be used as an alternative to the Language Line facility to conduct a visit, it is nevertheless recognised that on occasion the process is lengthy and therefore ‘flash cards’ could provide a more immediate response.

In January 2010, the Police Authority was pleased to formally recognise the valuable contribution and dedication of another of its ICVs. A certificate to commemorate 10 years service and support for the Scheme was awarded to the individual.

Activities during the Year

During 2009/10 Norfolk Police Authority organised for Independent Custody Visitors to:

- observe police officer training for using CS spray/restraint techniques
- attend 'refresher training' sessions including 'back to basics', How an ICV informs the Risk Assessment process, Child Protection, Role of a Custody Sergeant, role of an Appropriate Adult, advanced scenarios and 'how the Police deal with detainees with mental health issues';
- attend the National Independent Custody Visiting Association's (ICVA) Conference during November 2009 in Leicestershire;
- attend the Regional ICVA conference in Suffolk during July 2009.

Comments from our 5 Panel Co-ordinators'

"Good relationships continue with all Custody staff and they are friendly, helpful and will deal with queries raised by ourselves in a professional and expedient manner. Detainees continue to be largely satisfied with the service afforded to them during their stay in custody and the public can be assured that those in police custody are treated with respect and dignity. We look forward to the year ahead, particularly given that improved facilities are being built to further enhance the conditions within which people are detained."

Conclusion

Independent Custody Visiting continues to be essential in providing independent scrutiny of the treatment of detained persons and the conditions in which they are held. As well as the mutual level of protection it offers, the Scheme draws on the commitment of volunteers and helps to build partnerships between the police and the communities they serve; and raise confidence and satisfaction levels generally.

The commitment and enthusiasm on the part of Panel members is substantial, and continued thanks go to all those who give freely of their time in support of Independent Custody Visiting in Norfolk.



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

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For more information regarding the role of the Norfolk Police Authority, please visit our website: www.norfolk-pa.gov.uk

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