



Cambridgeshire Independent Custody Visitors' Scheme
Annual Report 2012-13

**GET CLOSER
AND SUPPORT THE FORCE!**



Introduction

This annual report details the work carried out by Independent Custody Visitors under the Cambridgeshire Police Authority and from the date of my election in November 2012.

It has been a unique year for our volunteers and credit must be paid to them for continuing to sustain their excellent work despite the constant change going on around them.

A reduction in budgets forced the Constabulary to take a fresh look at custody provision to ensure it delivered value for money, while providing the highest standard of care.

This has resulted in changes in working practices, the opening hours of custody suites and the training provision for staff. In particular I was encouraged to see custody staff learning more about mental health issues. This will enable them to ensure detainees with mental ill health receive the most appropriate care, in the most appropriate environment.

I was of course reassured that our ICVs, on their unannounced visits, reported that detainees in Cambridgeshire do receive an appropriate professional standard of care. Without exception they found well cared for detainees whose immediate needs were being met.

I would like to extend my thanks to the ICVs who donate their time and energy to help me fulfil my statutory responsibility of ensuring detainees in Cambridgeshire are treated fairly, and with dignity and respect. And, that Cambridgeshire's custody officers and staff adhere to the national standards set.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G. Bright', with a stylized flourish.

Sir Graham Bright

Organisation of the scheme in Cambridgeshire

Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) are members of the local community who volunteer to make unannounced visits, in pairs, to police station custody suites to check and report on the treatment and wellbeing of detainees.

On 31st March 2013, there were 37 volunteers serving the Independent Custody Visitors' Scheme across Cambridgeshire. Volunteers come from various backgrounds and sections of the community. Cambridgeshire volunteers range in age from 23 to over 70 with a relatively equal split between men and women. It has representation from both the White British, Black and Asian community.

The scheme is divided into three panels whose members undertake visits across five custody suites:

- Peterborough – which covers Thorpe Wood and March police stations
- Huntingdon – which covers St Neots and Huntingdon police stations; and
- Cambridge – which covers Parkside police station.

Each panel has its own local volunteer co-ordinator and is supported by the Scheme Administrator based in the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner .

How does it work

Pairs of ICVs from each panel visit their respective custody suites once a week. ICVs from the Huntingdon and Peterborough panel carry out monthly visits to St Neots and March police stations to ensure those facilities are fit for purpose if required.

Each ICV reports on the observations made during their visit. This report is then sent to the Local Panel Co-ordinator, Local Custody Manager and the Scheme Administrator. A selection of observations from these reports are included in this annual report.

“CELLS BEING
CLEANED
DURING VISIT.
FOOD STOCKS
OK. CELL 8 OUT
OF USE DUE TO
TEMPERATURE.”

“JUVENILE MALE (16YRS) – DETAINED SINCE 01.00.
HAD RIGHTS EXPLAINED. NO MEDICAL NEEDS.
HAD FOOD & DRINK – SATISFIED WITH HIS
TREATMENT. APPROPRIATE ADULT IN ATTENDANCE”

**“ADULT MALE – DETAINED SINCE SUNDAY – SUBJECT TO
EXTENSION, HAD EXERCISED HIS RIGHTS – HAD FOOD &
DRINK. NO MEDICAL NEEDS – SATISFIED WITH HIS
TREATMENT “ATTENDANCE”**

Particular issues or trends are noted by the Co-ordinator and Scheme Administrator. These trends are then scrutinised at local level, within panel meetings, and at a higher level, within the Police and Crime Commissioner’s Custody Visitors’ Panel. This panel considers emerging themes or concerns surrounding custody, scrutinises the performance of the scheme, and ensures that any necessary follow up action is completed.

The independent nature of the scheme is particularly important to detainees who come from communities where there is a high level of distrust between the public and police. Cambridgeshire is well known for the variety of languages spoken across the county, with more than a hundred different languages represented. ICVs have met this communication challenge by using flash cards. These information cards translate the function and purpose of an ICV and questions relating to rights and welfare into 18 of the most frequently encountered languages. Local ICVs regularly report on how effective the flash cards are.

Another success has been the use of self-introduction. This is a process where ICVs introduce themselves to detainees directly, rather than through police custody staff.

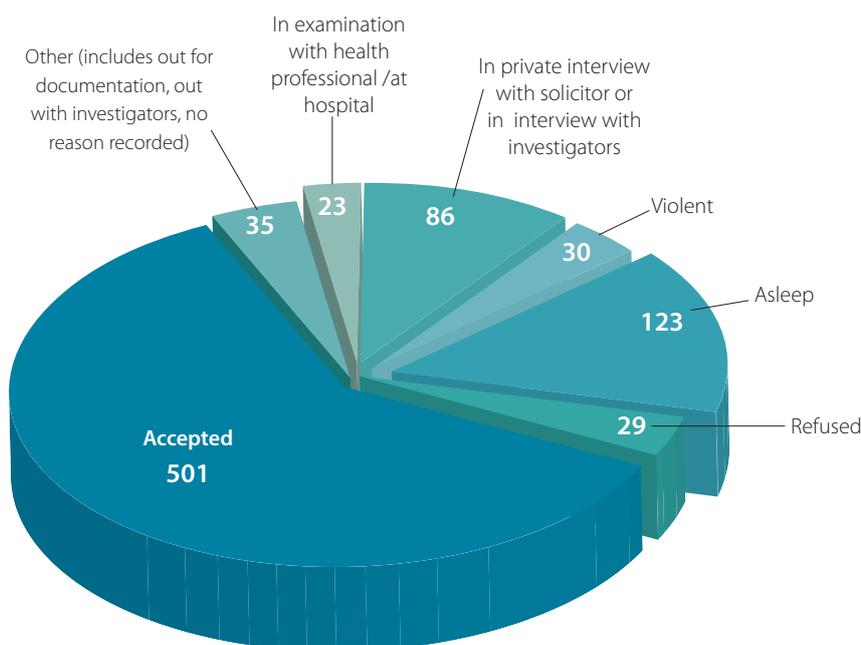
**“MALE LATVIAN –
REASONABLE SPOKEN
ENGLISH, ADVISED OF
RIGHTS HAD
FRICTION BURN
INJURIES ON HIS
FOREHEAD
AND FACE SAID HE
HAD BEEN TREATED
WELL AND WOULD
LIKE TO APOLOGISE
TO THE OFFICER WHO
ARRESTED HIM”**

The numbers of all detainees who now refuse visits is stable at around six per cent per year compared to more than 14 per cent before self-introduction and the use of flash cards. The below table illustrates this downward trend over the last two years.

Period	Detainees who refuse a visit (%)
Jan 2011 – March 2011	14.1
Self Introduction Starts	
Apr 2011 – June 2011	11.5
June 2011 – Sept 2011	6.8
Oct 2011 – Dec 2011	4.0
Jan 2012 – March 2012	3.4
Apr 2012 – March 2013	5.7

In detail for the period 1st April 2012 to 31st March 2013.

Detainees response



Visits made by ICVs

Between 1st April 2012 and 31st March 2013: a total of 178 visits were made across the five custody suites, 797 persons were detained at the time the visits were conducted; of those, 501 detainees were seen and 29 refused a visit.

Although ICVs act in the best interests of the detainees, detainees are not obliged to speak to ICVs or accept a visit. Occasionally ICVs may be advised against visiting a particular detainee on health and safety grounds. In these cases, they may be given the opportunity to view the detainee through the cell door hatch to satisfy themselves of the detainee's welfare.

The scheme in your area

The Peterborough Panel

The Peterborough ICV Panel visits the custody suite at Thorpe Wood in Peterborough and the Fenland custody suite at March. 54 visits to Thorpe Wood and 11 to March were carried out by the 13 Panel Members during the year.

The number of detainees held in Peterborough has decreased significantly again this year. Thorpe Wood continues to be the busiest custody suite in the county.

The Panel was pleased to note that the general level of cleanliness of the Thorpe Wood custody suite has improved over the past year.

During the past year March custody suite has been designated as the reserve custody facility for the county, no detainees were held at March.

An inquest was held in February 2013 into the death in custody of Mr Zbigniew Symonowicz at Thorpe Wood in July 2009. A jury returned a narrative verdict, saying there was “no clear evidence that he intended to take his own life”.

Following the verdict the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) issued a statement “The IPCC’s investigation found no evidence any police officers failed in their duties in their treatment of Mr. Symonowicz for the short period he was in custody.”

Given that people are often detained against their will, it would be unreasonable not to expect any complaints over treatment whilst held in detention. When complaints are made to the Custody Visitors we endeavor to establish if they are valid.

The majority of detainees interviewed were satisfied with the treatment they received whilst held in custody. We found no instances where a detained person had not been treated in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act.

Andrew Wilcox

Panel Chairman

The Cambridge Panel

The Cambridge/Ely Independent Custody Visitors Panel has had a reasonably successful year. Two ICVs have visited Parkside Police Station together every week. We have lost two members of the Panel during the year but have recruited four new members. In November one of our group attended the National ICV Conference in Bristol and several members attended a Spring Conference at Hinchingsbrooke Headquarters. I have twice visited Monks Wood Centre to speak to potential detention officers from different parts of Cambridgeshire about the role of the Independent Custody Visitor. During the year we have said goodbye to Pheobe Murphy and Rowena Sampson and welcomed John Hazell as ICV Scheme Administrator at Hinchingsbrooke. We look forward to another good year of working together.

Peter Kerswell

Panel Coordinator

The Huntingdon Panel

Members of the Huntingdon Independent Custody Visitors Panel visit the custody facilities at Huntingdon & St. Neot's police stations. Membership of the panel currently stands at ten visitors, who each make a visit, in pairs, approximately once every five weeks.

The panel is strongly supported by the Constabulary and the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner, with whom it enjoys healthy and open dialogue at its quarterly meetings. Although it was a year of significant change for the Police Authority, Constabulary & OPCC, for the custody visiting panel it was very much 'business as usual'.

No major issues were uncovered during the 64 visits undertaken by the panel this year. Visits ranged from five minutes to 95 minutes duration, with an average of 30 minutes. Visitors were pleased to have interviewed 96 of the 157 (61 per cent) detainees present during their visits. Only 5 per cent of those who could receive a visit actually declined the opportunity. The remainder were unable by reason of rest periods, interviews, etc. The panel noted that improvements in the cleaning service have been sustained. The panel continues to pay particular attention to the detention of juveniles and those with mental health issues. A high standard of care continues to be delivered, thanks largely to a dedicated team of Detention Officers.

The operating regime of reduced hours coming into effect for Huntingdon Police Station will not change the number of visits carried out by the panel, which will still take place at least once weekly. The panel is very welcoming and the turnover rate is such that we are able to invite one or two new members each year. The panel is pleased to record that the public can have confidence that the requirements of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act are being fully met in Huntingdon and St. Neot's.

Tom Quilligan

Panel Coordinator

Highlights and achievements 2012/13

The Commissioner is pleased to note that the excellent progress reported last year has been maintained. ICVs have reported positively on the accommodating approach and professionalism of custody staff across the county.

Custody changes

During 2011/2012 Cambridgeshire Constabulary embarked on a 'root and branch' change management programme to deliver the savings needed to meet the £6 million funding gap for the year.

The provision of custody was included within this review which gathered best practice and learning from other forces, our own staff and the ICVs.

In September 2012, at a meeting of the Force Executive Board, the changes to the custody model were agreed. The new model ensured continued compliance with the 'Manual of Safer Detention' (now the 'Authorised Professional Practice – Custody and Detention').

The changes, which were implemented at the end of 12/13 include:

- Introduction of a uniformed shift pattern for all custody staff in which Detention Officers and Custody Officers work the same shift pattern. This shift pattern is in line with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies (HMIC) recommendations.
- Development of the Detention Officer role to include additional roles and responsibilities such as: booking-in detainees, taking samples within the custody environment, and capturing visual evidence for subsequent identification procedures.
- Reduction in the overall custody establishment.
- Change in opening hours for Huntingdon Custody Suite from 24/7 to 2pm on a Thursday to Monday morning.
- Introduction of whole-team training days every ten weeks. This enhanced training regime seeks to further professionalise the custody function within the county. Inputs have already been given on mental health, conditional cautioning, substance misuse and referral pathways into outside agencies such as drugs and alcohol services.

The centralised custody structure remains but has strengthened with two Custody Managers at inspector rank responsible for all custody matters such as estates, staff management, custody process and procedure issues.

Cambridgeshire Constabulary acknowledges and values the work and support of the Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs). They apply an independent scrutiny to the county's custody provision thereby providing reassurance to local communities that detainees are treated with sensitivity, integrity and respect, and, in accordance with PACE and the Authorised Professional Practice (Detention and Custody).

Through their regular attendance at custody suites across the county they ensure that the facilities are maintained to a satisfactory standard; through their links with schemes across the country they share best practice and make recommendations from lessons learned elsewhere.

On behalf of the Constabulary, a heartfelt thank you is extended to each and every ICV.

Chief Inspector Laura Hunt

Contact the Police and Crime Commissioner

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