

**INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING SCHEME**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

**2015**

**Introduction**

Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) Schemes exist to provide reassurance to local communities that they can have confidence in the way in which the police treat people who are held in their custody.

Ensuring effective management and oversight of the ICV Scheme is a statutory responsibility of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC).

The PCC is independent of the police and his main responsibility is to hold the Chief Constable to account for the decisions and actions the police take.

The ICV visiting process and procedure is governed by a Code of Practice which is issued by the Home Office. The protocols for how this will take place in Surrey are agreed between the PCC’s Office (OPCC) and Surrey Police.

The OPCC recruits volunteer ICVs to undertake the role and provides them with support and on-going training to ensure that they can discharge their role effectively.

The Scheme plays an important part in maintaining police accountability to the local community and the aim of this Annual Report is to ensure that this information is available in the public domain.

**How the Scheme Works**

ICVs are volunteers who visit police stations, in pairs, and speak to detainees who are being held in police custody. Visits are random and unannounced so that the police do not know when they will take place. ICVs arrive at the custody suite and are given immediate access to the suite on production of their ID card. They enter police cells and speak to individuals being held with their permission. Conversations with detainees focus on welfare needs and the provision of rights and entitlements under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE). ICVs also review a detainee’s custody record with their permission to ensure that the detainee has been treated appropriately. ICVs are not concerned with the identity of the detainee or with the reason for their detention. Any issues raised are discussed as appropriate with custody staff. ICVs also inspect and comment on the general condition and facilities of the custody suite including the kitchen, medical room and showers. ICVs look, listen, observe and report back to the OPCC on their findings. The OPCC takes any issues forwards with Surrey Police in the appropriate way, keeping ICVs informed of feedback and actions agreed.

ICVs come from a variety of backgrounds and sections of the community. They must be over the age of 18 and live, study or work within the Surrey policing borders. At the end of 2015, the Surrey ICV Scheme had 40 volunteers undertaking this role.

**Introduction**

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey is very proud of, and grateful to, those volunteers in our Custody Visiting teams who give up their time to check and comment on the welfare and treatment of people who find themselves in Surrey Police custody suites.

I am proud to present the Annual Report for the Surrey ICV Scheme to you and would like to thank Surrey’s Independent Custody Visitors for their continued service.

Alison Bolton

Chief Exectutive

**How the Scheme is Organised**

Surrey Police operates from three custody suites at Guildford, Staines and Salfords (Reigate area). The Woking suite was closed for 24/7 operation in November 2013, but is kept in a state of readiness so that it can be used on a planned basis when extra capacity is required, for example if there is a special operation likely to result in a planned large number of arrests or if a suite is closed for regular maintenance/cleaning. The custody provision in 2015 was as follows:-

Guildford (24 cells)

Salfords (24 cells)

Staines (19 cells)

Woking (15 cells) – only opened to cover operational need on an ad hoc basis

Each of the three 24/7 custody suites has its own panel of ICVs. The panel is responsible for organising the visiting rota. Each panel meets on a quarterly basis with the custody inspector responsible for the suite and the ICV Scheme Manager to discuss the visits made and any issues raised.

During a custody visit, a member of the custody staff escorts the visitors around the suite to ensure their safety. All conversations with detainees are conducted out of hearing of the escorting officer.

At the end of the visit, the ICVs complete a short report form which is forwarded to the OPCC. All issues raised by ICVs are recorded and taken forwards in the appropriate way by the OPCC.



Answers to concerns raised and actions agreed are reported back to the ICVs on a timely basis and discussed as appropriate at the quarterly panel meetings.

**Visiting Statistics for 2015**

During the period January to December 2015, a total of 192 custody visits were undertaken.

In 2015, a total of 16250 people were held in Surrey custody centres (a reduction of almost 12% in a year on year comparison with 2014). Of these, 1276 detainees (7.85%) were in custody at the time the ICVs visited. This sample size is broadly consistent with that of the previous 4 years.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Summary** | **2012** | **2013** | **2014** | **2015** |
| Total number of detainees | 19085 | 20184 | 18395 | 16250 |
| Total in custody at time of ICV visit | 1236 | 1360 | 1477 | 1276 |
| Total accepting a visit | 610 | 715 | 697 | 588 |
| Total not possible to visit\* | 604 | 618 | 743 | 666 |
| Total refusing a visit | 22 | 27 | 37 | 22 |

588 detainees (3.62% of the overall total number of detainees) accepted an ICV visit; a further 666 detainees were not available to the ICVs for viable reasons - \*in the main because they were sleeping or in police interview (full details held by Scheme Manager)

96.26% of all the detainees who were asked by ICVs if they were willing to discuss their treatment in police custody agreed to do so and a further 2.3% of detainees, whilst declining a custody visit, agreed that the ICVs could have access to their custody record in order to obtain an overview of their treatment whilst held in custody. This is felt to be a very good result when benchmarked nationally with other custody visiting schemes and is largely due to the policy of ICVs introducing themselves and the Scheme to detainees as opposed to this introduction being custody staff led.

Surrey ICVs assume access to the anonymised custody records of detainees who are not available to them in order to have some kind of overview of the welfare and treatment of as many detainees as possible. Taking this into account, ICVs had some form of welfare access to 1268 of the detainees in custody at the time of their visit - just 8 detainees expressly refused the ICVs this permission when asked. This means that ICVs had some form of welfare access and the opportunity to comment on the detention of 7.81% of the total Surrey custody population in 2015.

Visits provide a snapshot of what is going on in custody at the time of the visit and are undertaken across all days of the week and on a 24 hour basis. Each ICV Panel aims to complete one weekly visit between the hours of 6am and 11pm and one monthly ‘out of hours’ visit (between 11pm and 6am). This is crucial to ensure that visits do not become predictable and do not occur at set times.

The Surrey Scheme also operates a system of six cross panel visits per year. This is where one of the ICVs involved in the visit belongs to a panel which visits another suite. This ensures good practice is shared across all ICV panels and all custody suites.

**Issues Reported**

ICVs are encouraged to resolve minor welfare concerns raised by detainees with staff at the time of their visit. They debrief with a custody sergeant at the end of each visit wherever possible enabling clarification of issues where necessary on both sides. Any issues which cannot be resolved in custody will be taken forward by the ICV Scheme Manager as appropriate.

Concerns reported to the Scheme Manager are logged and followed up with the Force. The outcomes are notified to all ICVs to enable discussion at panel meetings and cross-panel learning.

In 2015, ICVs raised concerns around issues such as:-

. Some incidences of out of date food in the store cupboards

. Showers not being routinely facilitated for detainees who were held in custody overnight

. Following the introduction of a new shift pattern, there being times in the day when custody staff numbers dipped giving rise to concern about pressure on staff in instances where there might be high number of detainees in custody and/or detainees with complex issues

. Reviews of detention performed whilst the detainee was asleep not being recorded as advised to the detainee on awakening in some cases

ICVs have continued to work with the Scheme Manager and custody staff to stream-line working practices following the introduction of electronic custody records in Surrey in February 2014. These new practices are now fairly well embedded and ICVs report a more efficient visit experience. Effort has also been made to ensure that the ICV visit is better co-ordinated on the custody staff side with the Custody Sergeant taking overall responsibility for facilitating the visit once the ICVs arrive and ICVs de-briefing with the Custody Sergeant at the end of the visit wherever possible.

**HMIP/C Joint Inspection of Custody**

Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) and Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) perform joint inspections of all police custody suites in England and Wales under the scrutiny requirements of the United Nations (UN) Optional Protocol against Torture (OPCAT). To meet this requirement, HMIC and HMIP have established a programme of inspections on a 5/6 year rolling basis. These inspections look, not only at the implementation of statutory requirements, but also at the conditions of detention and the treatment of detainees.

A Joint Inspection of Surrey’s custody suite took place in January 2015 and ICVs and the Scheme Manager were interviewed during the course of this inspection. The full report can be accessed at <http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprisons/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2015/06/Surrey-Custody-Suite-web-2015.pdf>

ICVs have worked with the Scheme Manager and custody staff to ensure that the recommendations of this report around welfare, conditions and rights and entitlements are implemented and monitored as appropriate.

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**Training and Other Events**

The best custody visiting schemes have the best trained custody visitors and we take our responsibility in keeping our ICVs up-dated on changes in the custody environment relevant to their role very seriously.

We hold an Annual Training Day each year inviting speakers on topics relevant to custody. We also offer our ICVs the opportunity to attend local and regional training events and the ICVA National Conference. Reports were compiled by those attending and circulated to all to share the learning.

The Annual Thank You Event was again held at G Live in Guildford in November 2015, with the purpose of thanking the volunteers for their continued commitment. The guest speaker for the evening was Sally Varah, Deputy Lieutenant of Surrey, who gave a very interesting insight into her work in offender rehabilitation and diversion programmes across Surrey.

**Regional Collaboration and ICVA**

The South East Regional ICV Scheme Managers (Hampshire, Sussex, Surrey, Kent and Thames Valley) exchange information and meet on a six-monthly basis in order to bench-mark the Schemes and share information and best practice.

The Surrey ICV Scheme continues to be a member of the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA). ICVA provides access to training for ICVs at all levels as well as support and reference for the Scheme Manager. The Surrey ICV Scheme Manager is a Director on the ICVA Board and represents the SE Region at a national level.

**Recruitment**

We recruited 9 new ICVs in 2015. The Scheme continues to operate with three ICV Panels attached to the three custody centres and panel numbers will ideally be maintained at 12-14 members per panel.

These numbers afford the Scheme some resilience in case of resignation or sickness.

The ICV role is permanently advertised on the PCC website and with all Surrey volunteer bureaux. We also promote the role with further education establishments and with partner agencies.

Following a recruitment drive in early 2016, there are no vacancies on any of the ICV Panels at the time of writing and it is anticipated that the Scheme will continue to recruit on an annual basis.

**Equality and Diversity**

To ensure that the public has confidence in the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme, it is important that the volunteers who undertake this role are representative of the local community. At the end of 2015, we had 40 independent custody visitors, 20 of whom were male and 20 of whom were female. The age range of these visitors was as follows:-

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2012** | **2013** | **2014** | **2015** |
| **18-29** | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| **30-39** | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| **40-49** | 9 | 7 | 4 | 3 |
| **50-59** | 9 | 5 | 6 | 9 |
| **60-69** | 21 | 18 | 17 | 19 |
| **70+** | 6 | 7 | 7 | 6 |

Just over half of our current volunteers have 5 years or more experience in the role.

**Volunteer and Make a Difference**

If you are interested in finding out more about Independent Custody Visiting, please contact us. We would like to hear from you if you:-

* Are over 18
* Live, work or study within the Surrey Police borders
* Are able to communicate well with a diverse range of people
* Are able to work as part of a team
* Are flexible and reliable
* Are a good listener
* Are objective and non-judgemental
* Are able to maintain confidentiality
* Have lived in the UK for the past three years

An application pack can be downloaded from our website at

<http://www.surrey-pcc.gov.uk/independent-custody-visiting/>

A hard copy of the application pack can be requested from this office.

**Contact Details**

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