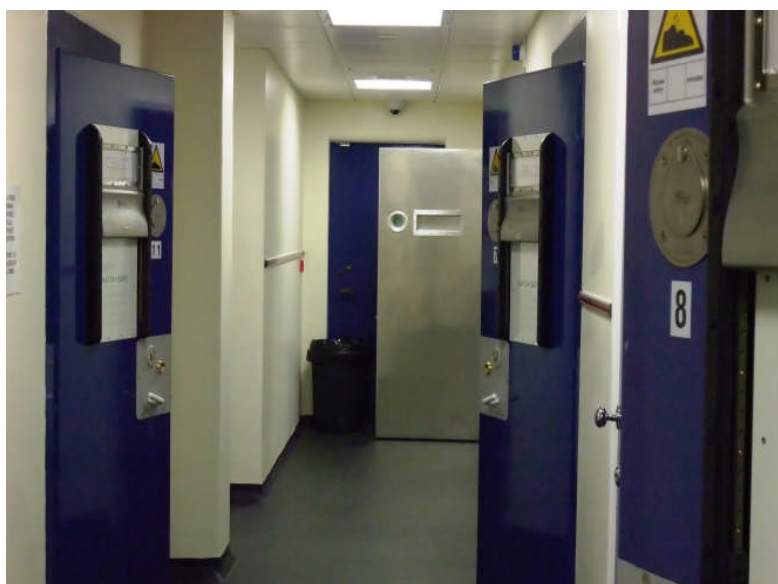




**LEICESTERSHIRE**  
**POLICE AUTHORITY**

**Independent Custody**  
**Visiting Scheme**



**Annual Report 2009/10**

## Introduction

Independent Custody Visiting Schemes exist to provide assurance to local communities that they can have confidence in how the police treat people who are held in their custody.

Leicestershire Police Authority is responsible for ensuring that an Independent Custody Visiting Scheme is in place for Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland. The Police Authority is a body of 17 people who are independent of the Constabulary and whose primary role is to ensure that an efficient and effective police service is in place for the area.



Independent Custody Visiting is the sole responsibility of the Police Authority. However, the processes and practices put into place to deliver the Scheme are agreed with the Chief Constable. The Police Authority recruits volunteers to undertake the role, provide training, scrutinise reports from visits and oversee all aspects of administration.



The Scheme plays an important part in maintaining police accountability to the local community. The Authority publishes information on the Scheme three times a year on its website and an annual report is also published following the end of the financial year.

## How the Scheme Works

Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) are volunteers who visit police stations, in pairs, and speak to individuals who are being held in police custody. Visits are unannounced and ICVs arrange between themselves when it is convenient for them to visit. ICVs arrive at the police station and on production of their identity card, are given immediate access to the custody suite. They enter police cells and speak to individuals being held. Conversations with detainees focus on their welfare needs and any issues raised are taken forward on their behalf with the Custody Sergeant. ICVs also inspect other areas of the custody suite for health and safety purposes. ICVs look, listen, observe and report back on their findings.



ICVs come from a variety of backgrounds and sections of the community. They must be over 18 years of age and have no direct or indirect involvement in the criminal justice system. A comprehensive training programme is provided along with support from other ICVs and the Scheme Administrator. At the current time Leicestershire Police Authority has 37 volunteers undertaking this role.

## How the Scheme is organised in Leicestershire

During 2009/10 there were four primary custody suites in Leicestershire as follows:-

- Euston Street (36 cells)
- Loughborough (12 cells)
- Keyham Lane (17 cells)
- Wigston (12 cells).

Each custody suite has its own team of ICVs with a team leader, known as a Co-ordinator, who is responsible for organising a visit rota and arranging quarterly team meetings.



Each pair of ICVs is provided with a 'window' of seven days in which to make a visit. It is left to the ICVs themselves to arrange the time and date the visit will take place and this information is disclosed to no other person ensuring that the ICVs will be totally unexpected when they arrive at the custody suite.

During a custody visit a member of the custody staff will accompany the visitors around the suite but are not present during conversations with the detained person.

At the end of the visit a visit report form is completed by the ICVs and forwarded to the Police Authority. All issues raised by ICVs are reported and monitored by the Authority's Professional Standards Committee.



## Visiting Statistics for 2009/10

During the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010 a total of 200 custody visits were undertaken at the four primary sites which are open 24 hours as follows:-

Euston Street	-	52 visits
Loughborough	-	45 visits
Wigston	-	52 visits
Keyham Lane	-	51 visits

At the time visits were undertaken a total of 1298 people were detained in police custody. Of these 787 were asked if they wished to speak to custody visitors about any aspect of their welfare. A total of 729 (93%) agreed to a visit.

During the year visits were undertaken across all days of the week and times of the day. This is crucial in ensuring visits do not become predictable and occur at set times. If ICVs visit at times when detainees are sleeping, they can inspect the general cleanliness and safety of the custody suite including kitchens, medical rooms, showers and interview rooms (unless they are in use).



## Issues Reported from Custody Visits

No major issues of concern have been reported from visits undertaken throughout the past year. From conversations with detainees, ICVs have recorded the following requests:-

- 85 for phone calls
- 80 for refreshments
- 68 for a doctor/nurse or medication
- 60 for blankets
- 39 to see a solicitor
- 24 for reading material
- 10 for personal washing facilities
- 9 for exercise
- 2 for an appropriate adult
- 2 for the cell to be cleaned
- 1 for cell temperature check
- 1 to see a drug referral worker.

All requests were reported to the Custody Sergeant with the majority being dealt with at the time.



Other issues highlighted during visits were as follows:-

- A detainee told ICVs of their concern about childcare issues which had not been previously reported to custody staff.  
*Once staff were informed, arrangements were immediately made for relatives to look after the children.*
- ICVs reported that a detainee's injury and request for a painkiller were not recorded on the custody record.

*Once custody staff were made aware, the injury was recorded and a healthcare professional called to administer a painkiller.*

- ICVs reported that a medical waste bin was full and hazardous waste had been placed in an ordinary black bin liner.  
*The process for emptying medical waste bins was reviewed and a more frequent regime of emptying the bins was implemented.*
- ICVs queried which meals were classified Halal as they were not specifically marked and this may cause confusion.  
*Staff confirmed that Halal meals had the phrase "prepared according to Islamic law" printed on the packaging.*

Custody visit reports also identified a number of health and safety issues including cutlery being left in cells, a fridge not working and fridge/freezer temperatures not being recorded. All issues were resolved promptly.

Longer term issues identified were an ongoing sewage smell at Wigston emanating from the shower drain. Work was undertaken on the drain trap and the issue was resolved. ICVs also reported plaster damage around cell door frames and the floor breaking up in the cell corridor. This issue will be addressed by the Constabulary's Estates Department and progress will be monitored during the forthcoming year.





**Regional Conference** – Custody visitors from Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire and Nottinghamshire attended a regional conference at the University of Northampton. Custody visitors received presentations on the work of the Crown Prosecution Service, the Probation Service and the effect of the drugs market on policing. There was also a food tasting session where ICVs sampled the type of meals offered to detainees whilst in custody.



**Regional Collaboration** – Scheme Administrators from the East Midlands' region met quarterly during the year to identify potential areas of joint working. The following were implemented across the region: a regional application pack including job description, person specification, application form and memorandum of understanding, regional terms of reference, a regional training strategy and a regional visit report form. Performance across all five authorities was also discussed along with the introduction of regional visiting targets.

## **Comments from Co-ordinators**



Kathleen Summerfield leads the team who visit Euston Street Custody Suite, she states:-

*“During the year, 52 visits were made to Euston Street custody suite. This tends to be a very busy suite and 544 detainees were in custody at the time of our visits. 316 detainees were offered a visit and 306 were seen. This is a 97% take up rate and is a truly commendable achievement by ICVs who also achieved a very good spread of visits. Only 10 detainees refused a visit and many of those not seen were on rest periods or in interview. Some areas of general concern were raised around the cleanliness of the suite and the healthcare provider however the great majority of detainees were very satisfied with their treatment whilst in custody. Issues highlighted by detainees were dealt with satisfactorily at the time and custody staff should be commended on their dedication, professionalism and commitment.”*



Marilyn Barnfield is the team leader for visits to Wigston Custody Suite. She says:-

*“During the period of this report, 52 visits were made to Wigston, with visits well spread throughout the year. 91% of time slots were filled and 99% of those offered visits agreed to be seen. As in previous years, the majority of detainees spoken to were satisfied with the conditions in which they were held and many made complimentary comments about staff. Issues raised by detainees were requested for extra blankets, drinks or food. Pot noodles continue to be a popular choice although a wide variety of ambient meals is currently available. When telephone calls were requested, these were allowed, unless barred for operational reasons. On at least one*

*occasion, Language Line was not available and during a visit by ICVs, it was evident that procedures had been delayed due to the unavailability of (in this case, Hungarian) translators. ICVs have been informed that they can use Language Line if they deem it necessary or appropriate. There continues to be a courteous, co-operative and professional relationship between ICVs and custody staff. This is supported by the Custody Manager who is always open to questions and prepared to investigate problems highlighted by ICVs. In turn, ICVs aim to be sensitive to situations they meet on arrival at the custody suite. Most staff appreciate the role of custody visitors. I would like to thank all team members for their commitment and professionalism to their role as custody visitors. Everyone has always been ready to step in to cover when asked – email has been so valuable this year. I would particularly like to thank my Deputy Co-ordinator for all his help, especially writing the minutes from the meetings. It has been an interesting and varied year!”*

### **Comments from the Police Authority**



Mr Paul Brown,  
Police Authority lead  
member for Custody  
Visiting says:-

*“It is reassuring to note that of the 200 visits undertaken last year only minor issues have been raised by those detained in police custody. The majority of these issues were dealt with at the time of the visit or shortly afterwards. From reports that have been presented to my Committee I am confident that police officers and police staff in Leicestershire Constabulary do everything in their power to ensure the welfare of persons in their care and in all cases full rights and entitlements have been provided. Independent Custody Visitors continue to do an invaluable job on behalf of the local community, in ensuring that this continues to be the case.”*

### **Equality and Diversity**

To ensure that the public can have confidence in the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme it is important that volunteers who undertake the role are representative of the local community. The Police Authority therefore collect equality monitoring data on all its custody visitors and of the current 47 custody visitors:-

- 21% are aged below 35, 31% are between 35-54 and 48% are 55 and over.
- 7% are disabled and 93% not disabled.
- 55% are female and 45% male.
- 3% are agnostic, 3% atheist, 3% Baptist, 8% Catholic, 13% Christian, 27% Church of England, 8% Hindu, 3% Methodist, 3% Muslim, 14% Sikh, 3% spiritualist and 12% no belief or faith.
- 3% are gay/lesbian and 97% heterosexual.
- 25% are Asian Indian, 2% Black African, 71% White British, 2% White Other.

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If you would like further information on the Scheme please contact:

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