



LEICESTERSHIRE POLICE AUTHORITY

INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING SCHEME

**ANNUAL REPORT
2010 - 2011**

INTRODUCTION

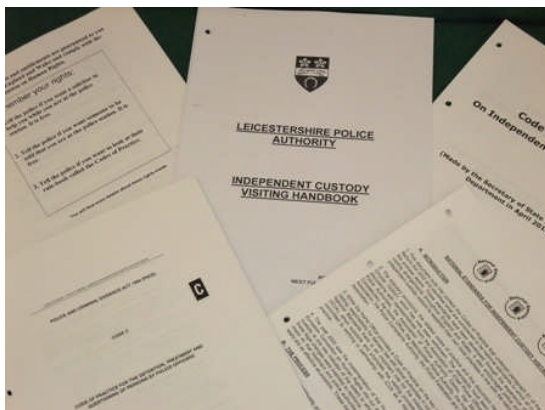
Independent Custody Visiting Schemes exist to provide assurance to local communities that they can have confidence in how the police treat people who are held in their custody.

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 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 45 volunteers undertaking this role.



HOW THE SCHEME IS ORGANISED

During 2010-11 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 report form is completed by ICVs and forwarded to the Police Authority. All issues raised by ICVs are reported and monitored by the Authority's Delivering Justice/Vulnerable People Group.

VISITING STATISTICS FOR 2010-11

During the period 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011 a total of 204 custody visits were undertaken at the four primary sites which are open 24 hours as follows:-

Euston Street	-	52 visits
Keyham Lane	-	49 visits
Loughborough	-	50 visits
Wigston	-	53 visits

At the time visits were undertaken a total of 1390 people were detained in police custody. Of these 802 were asked if they wished to speak to custody visitors about any aspect of their welfare. A total of 776 (97%) agreed to a visit – this is a 4% increase on the previous year.

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

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 refreshments
- 59 for phone calls
- 49 for a doctor/nurse or medication
- 47 for blankets
- 20 to see a solicitor
- 17 for reading material
- 15 for the cell to be cleaned
- 10 for cell temperature check
- 9 for personal washing facilities
- 7 for exercise
- 4 for an update
- 2 for toilet paper
- 2 for religious items
- 1 for writing material

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:-

- ICVs reported that a toiletries area containing razor blades was not locked posing a potential safety hazard.

Outcome – the razor blades were moved out of the toiletries area by staff and locked safely in another location.

- ICVs reported plaster damage around some cell door frames and on walls in cells.

Outcome – these were addressed by the Constabulary's Estates Department in a programme of maintenance work

- ICVs reported concerns about a lack of heating in the chute (the waiting area prior to a detainee being booked in) as this may affect the welfare of a vulnerable detainee.

Outcome – the Constabulary confirmed that chute waiting times were less than twenty minutes however, ill or vulnerable detainees would not be left to wait in the chute.

- ICVs reported that some detainees complained of being cold.

Outcome – cell temperatures are continually monitored by staff to ensure cells do not fall below 16°C and detainees are given extra blankets and regular hot food and drink.

Custody visit reports also identified a number of health and safety issues including the lack of cleanliness of kitchen areas on occasions, a lack of antibacterial wipes for food temperature probes, cutlery being left in cells and fridge/freezer temperatures not being recorded. All issues were resolved promptly.



Many of the visit forms received from ICVs contain positive comments regarding their visit including:

- Professional and courteous custody staff
- Prompt entry given to the custody suite
- Many detainees happy with their treatment.



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 risk assessment, an updated regional training strategy and Key Performance Indicators around recruitment, selection and retention, training, frequency and coverage of visits, access to custody area, detainees visits, regional collaboration and annual reports.

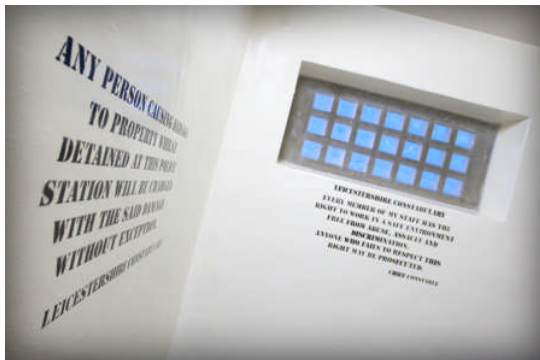


A regional advanced training day took place on 15 May 2010 at Leicestershire Police Headquarters and was attended by ICVs from across the East Midlands. Sessions included the Human Rights Act and workshops at which ICVs discussed scenarios and solutions.

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 45 custody visitors who have provided information:-

- 19% are aged below 35, 32% are between 35 and 54 and 49% are 55 and over.
- 7% are disabled and 93% not disabled.
- 58% are female and 42% male.
- 3% atheist, 5% Catholic, 14% Christian, 29% are Church of England, 5% Hindu, 3% Methodist, 3% Muslim, 16% Sikh, 3% Spiritualist and 16% have no belief or faith.
- 3% are gay/lesbian and 97% heterosexual.
- 23% are Asian Indian, 2.5% Black African, 72% White British, 2.5% White Other.



COMMENTS FROM THE POLICE AUTHORITY



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

“As the lead Authority member for Independent Custody Visiting I would not only want to thank the ICVs for their hard work and commitment over the last year but also thank the Police Authority officers for their continued support of the Scheme. Our Independent Custody Visitors give up their time to ensure the welfare of people held in police custody suites in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland and that their rights and entitlements are provided. This is a crucial role in ensuring that the police are accountable to the local community. Members of the Authority’s Delivering Justice/Vulnerable People Group receive regular update reports on the Scheme and scrutinise any issues

raised. It is pleasing that in the last twelve months there have been no significant areas of concern and the issues raised by ICVs have been dealt with promptly and professionally by the police officers and police staff of Leicestershire Constabulary. This year has seen a continued level of extremely high performance by our ICV’s and I am confident that team members will continue to meet these high standards and ensure people detained are treated with the upmost respect and dignity and receive a level of service that meets their individual needs.”

VOLUNTEER AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE

We are always looking for new people to join our Scheme. We would like to hear from you if you:

- are over 18;
- live or work within Leicester, Leicestershire or Rutland;
- 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 no connection with the Criminal Justice System.

If you would to learn more, please contact:

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www.leics-pa.police.uk