



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
POLICE AUTHORITY

Ensuring Quality Policing

Independent Custody Visiting Scheme

Annual Report 2007

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 2007 Annual Report of the Nottinghamshire Police Authority's Custody Visiting Scheme. This report covers the period from 1st January to 31st December 2007.

WHAT IS INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING

Independent Custody Visiting, which began nationwide in the early 1980's, following the Scarman Report into the Brixton disorders, is designed to provide an independent check on the welfare of people in police custody.

The Nottinghamshire Custody Visitors make unannounced visits, weekly, in pairs, to the City and County's 6 Custody Suites in Nottingham - Bridewell (in the City), Carlton, Mansfield, Newark, Oxclose Lane and Worksop, to check that detainees are receiving their rights and entitlements, such as meals, medical attention and legal advice. During the visits they do not take sides, but look, listen and report on what they find in the custody suite. They also check on the general conditions, such as the provision of blankets, cell cleanliness and the way the toilets and buzzers are functioning. At the end of each visit they make a short report that is provided both to the Police and the Police Authority, and is discussed at each of the quarterly Team Meetings.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This Annual Report covers issues encountered by the Custody Visitors in their visits during 2007 as well as other activities such as Team Meetings.

It is produced to update the Nottinghamshire Police Authority on the work of the Custody Visitors. It is also circulated within the community, which we hope will increase the understanding of the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme and help in the recruiting of new Visitors.

The Custody Visiting Scheme has tried to be as representative as possible, and to reflect this in the ethnic origin, gender, and age range of the membership. The appointment of new members to the Scheme takes account of the need to preserve and, where possible, to enhance the diversity.

Number of Custody Visitors		18	
Male		9	
Female		9	
Age Range	18-25	0	
	26-35	2	
	36-45	5	
	46-55	1	
	56-65	9	
	66-75	1	
	Over 75	0	
	Ethnic Group		
	Black British		1
Asian		1	
White		16	

Interest from prospective Independent Custody Visitors is always welcomed and anyone who is interested in joining the Scheme should contact the Scheme Administrator, Jackie Nash, Nottinghamshire Police Authority, County Hall, West Bridgford, Nottingham NG2 7QP. (Tel: 0115 9774911, E-mail Jackie.nash@nottinghamshire.pnn.police.uk)

- ⊛ You must either live or work in the Nottinghamshire area and be aged over 18.
- ⊛ You must not be, or have been, a serving police officer, special constable.
- ⊛ You must not be, or have been, involved in the criminal justice system eg. Magistrate or Solicitor.
- ⊛ You must not have a current criminal conviction.

HIGHLIGHTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2007

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During 2007 the Independent Custody Visitors worked hard to continue to fulfil their responsibilities and to maintain their presence in the community.

The Visitors were successful in achieving a high success rate of 92.94% in visiting the 6 Custody Suites throughout the County. (290 out of a scheduled 312 visits undertaken)

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One of the Nottinghamshire Custody Visitors received the Jean Varnam Community Award for outstanding commitment to the Custody Visiting Scheme. The Award was set up in honour of former Magistrate Police Authority Member Jean Varnam OBE who died in 2004.

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VISITING STATISTICS

The Schemes target in 2007 was to visit each of the Custody Suites throughout Nottinghamshire once a week.

Table 1 shows the number of visits made to each Custody Suite.

TABLE 1

Custody Suite	Number of Visits
Bridewell	50
Carlton	48
Mansfield	48
Newark	49
Oxclose Lane	47
Worksop	48

During the visits a total of 608 detainees were visited by the Custody Visitors. A total of 427 detainees were not visited, of which 195 indicated that they did not wish to speak to the Custody Visitors. The visitors were unable to see the remaining detainees as they were either sleeping, at interview, in the process of being released, violent or under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

A break down in figures can be seen in Table 2.

TABLE 2

Custody Suite	Detainees Visited	Detainees Declining a Visit	Unable to See
Bridewell	167	51	62
Carlton	76	14	36
Mansfield	116	45	51
Newark	49	28	23
Oxclose Lane	113	35	28
Worksop	87	22	32

Table 3 shows the times that the Custody Visitors made their visits. It is apparent that very few night visits were made during 2007 (eg between the hours of 11.00pm and 7.00am). This was mainly due to the fact that the detainees are entitled to eight hours undisturbed sleep and because of this the Visitors might not have access to the detainees in the midnight hours. Most visits took place between the hours of 3pm and 7pm.

TABLE 3

Station	7am - 11am	11am - 3pm	3pm - 7pm	7pm - 11pm	11pm - 3am	3am - 7am
Bridewell	14	10	13	12	1	0
Carlton	6	7	21	14	0	0
Mansfield	11	6	13	16	1	0
Newark	8	13	18	11	1	0
Oxclose Lane	10	8	12	18	0	0
Worksop	9	10	19	8	0	0
TOTAL	58	54	96	79	3	0

Table 4 shows the days on which the visits were made during the year. The Visitors have tried to vary both the times and days on which visits were made.

TABLE 4

Station	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Bridewell	7	15	13	4	4	5	2
Carlton	10	15	11	4	7	1	0
Mansfield	10	8	7	13	4	3	2
Newark	7	9	12	12	5	1	5
Oxclose Lane	7	8	7	11	4	4	7
Worksop	6	6	9	8	9	6	2
TOTAL	47	61	59	52	33	20	18

ISSUES ARISING DURING 2007

The Bridewell

- ✳ Plastering in cells.
- ✳ Damage to the Padded Cell
- ✳ Faulty alarm button.
- ✳ General repairs and maintenance
- ✳ Broken glass panels in cells
- ✳ Catering provision - dietary requirements
- ✳ Propping open of fire doors
- ✳ Unsuitable sanitary protection for women
- ✳ Confidentiality in solicitors rooms - soundproofing
- ✳ Cleaning of custody suite
- ✳ Provision of blankets
- ✳ Faulty microwave
- ✳ Disposal of sharps bins

Carlton

- ✳ Drain cover holes too small in exercise yard
- ✳ Lack of sharps bin in surgery
- ✳ Inadequate drainage in the showers
- ✳ Shortage of blankets
- ✳ Loose panel in holding cell

Mansfield

- ✳ Faulty sink
- ✳ Smell from drains
- ✳ Replacement of old microwave
- ✳ Staffing levels
- ✳ Shortage of blankets
- ✳ General repairs and maintenance
- ✳ Leaking ceiling

- ✳ Possible ligature points in the exercise yards
- ✳ Drainage problems in exercise yard
- ✳ Faulty camera on custody desk
- ✳ Problem with accessing panic strips in the surgery
- ✳ Provision of fresh water

Newark

- ✳ Drainage holes in the showers too small
- ✳ Faulty lights in the exercise yard
- ✳ Water leaking into medical room and corridor
- ✳ Proper disposal of sharps bins
- ✳ General repairs and maintenance problems referred back to the contractors
- ✳ Lack of privacy for detainees when showering
- ✳ Cleaning of cells
- ✳ Washing facilities

Oxclose Lane

- ✳ Van dock being used to store old tapes awaiting disposal
- ✳ Out of date food in store cupboard
- ✳ Surgical waste bin being used for disposal of cups and boxes
- ✳ Shortage of blankets
- ✳ Faulty microwave oven
- ✳ Loose drain cover in exercise yard
- ✳ Surgery being left in a mess following use
- ✳ Lack of clothing supplies

Worksop

- ✳ Faulty call button
- ✳ Health and Safety issues regarding storage
- ✳ Cell lights too bright
- ✳ Proper disposal of sharps bins
- ✳ Shortage of blankets
- ✳ Flooding in exercise yard

POLICE

When issues have been raised with the Police, they have generally been dealt with promptly, which helps maintain a co-operative and open relationship. The Chief Inspector responsible for Custody is invited to attend the Team Meetings on a regular basis, and these sessions have been very helpful to ensure practices are clarified and issues of concern addressed.

The Custody Visitors are also pleased to report that whilst they are undoubtedly an additional responsibility to custody staff when they are busy, their role is generally well understood and accepted.

Message from Chief Inspector Matt McFarlane,

The custody visitors perform a very important role, making sure that the standards applied to the treatment and care of detainees are as high as we can achieve. During the last year, I am pleased to see that there have been very few concerns regarding the way detainees have been cared for or treated by custody staff. Most of the issues raised have been ones of general maintenance within the custody suites, these have been addressed as part of ongoing works. As high use areas, the custody suites do require regular ongoing maintenance works.

Some minor problems were encountered during the changeover to a new blanket laundry contract; these have now been solved, with increased stocks of blankets where required. Custody staff have a telephone number and an email box to contact regarding any problems with levels of stocks and supplies.

An area where we have improved over the last year, is access to suites for the custody visitors, it is rare now to hear of any delays in gaining entry.

Custody visitors do regularly make positive comments about the way they have been received by staff – this has at times included specific praise for individuals. In particular, several custody visitors have commented to me personally at team meetings how impressed they have been by the way detention officers undertake their role when under the pressure of a very busy custody environment.

2008 IN FOCUS

During 2008 the Nottinghamshire Custody Visiting Scheme will continue to work to fulfil its responsibilities and to maintain its presence in the community. They will seek -

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- ✪ To achieve a high success rate in visiting each of the six Custody Suites in Nottinghamshire every week;

- ✪ To continue the recruitment campaign and to seek to maintain a diverse and representative Custody Visiting Scheme;

- ✪ To improve training for new visitors, and refresher training for existing visitors in order to maintain appropriate standards on visits;

- ✪ To improve regular attendance at meetings.

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