

Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Annual Report 2015/16



Suffolk Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Annual Report

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Introduction by Tim Passmore, Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk

This report provides an overview of the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme in Suffolk and includes details of what the volunteers on our two panels have been doing between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016.

Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) are volunteers from our local community who visit the two Police Investigation Centres (PICs) in the county, unannounced and in pairs, to check on the welfare of detained persons and the conditions in which they are held. They help me to fulfil my responsibility to ensure that policing in Suffolk is carried out fairly, in accordance with relevant legislation and Home Office guidance, and with respect for the human rights of all those coming into contact with the police.

Detainees in Suffolk are held at either the PIC situated in Bury St Edmunds or the PIC at Martlesham Heath. There is a Panel of visitors allocated to each one to ensure visits are made on a weekly basis. Those detained in the Waveney area are taken to the PIC at Gorleston as part of the joint provision of custody services with Norfolk.

I should like to place on record my thanks to the ICVs in Suffolk for their dedication and commitment in undertaking this important role.

I hope that you find this report interesting and informative. I am pleased that ICVs continue to give reassurance that, in Suffolk, the treatment of detained persons is fair and in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (referred to as PACE) and the Safer Detention Guidelines.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Passmore". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Comment from Gareth Wilson, Chief Constable

One of the most significant actions my officers can take is to deprive someone of their liberty. Their treatment within one of our Custody Centres is, quite rightly, subject of scrutiny by the ICVs. Suffolk Constabulary prides itself on how we interact with our communities and to have transparency surrounding such a sensitive part of our business is welcomed to ensure we are fully aware of our levels of service and to identify how we can continue to improve.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gareth Wilson". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Organisation of the Scheme in Suffolk

As at 31 March 2016, there were 15 ICVs participating in the Scheme across the county, 8 on the Bury St Edmunds Panel and 7 on the Ipswich Panel. Each Panel nominates a 'Co-ordinator', who is responsible for creating a rota of visits which ensure that only the ICVs know what day and time they will arrive to speak to detainees, and provides the Scheme with greater credibility and independence.

The Custody Visiting Scheme seeks to be representative of our communities, including taking account of different ethnic origins, gender and age ranges. When we appoint new members to the Scheme, consideration is given to enhancing this representation.

The following table provides a statistical summary of the custody visitors by gender and age.

Suffolk ICVs Data		
Gender	Male	5
	Female	10
Age	18-29	2
	30-39	1
	40-49	1
	50-59	3
	60-69	5
	70+	3

Details of visits

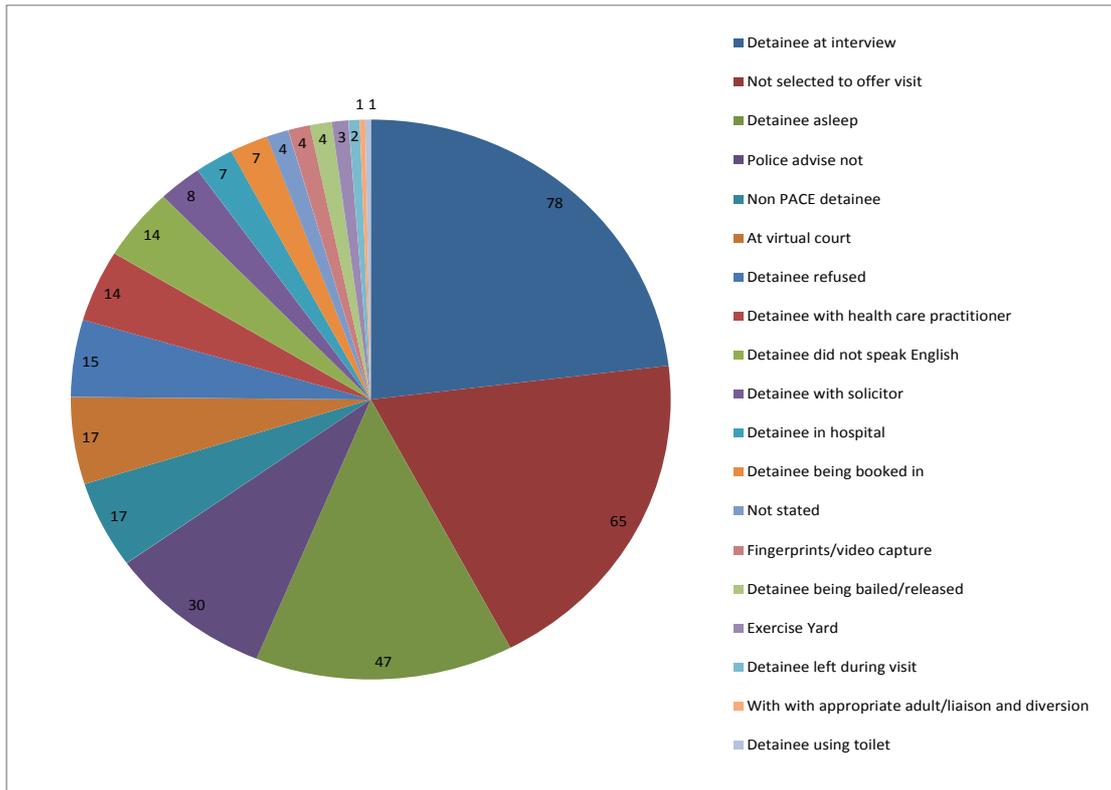
Between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016, a total of 100 visits were made. 625 persons were detained in custody at the time visits were conducted and 320 of these were visited. Whilst offered a visit, there is no obligation for a detained person to speak with ICVs.

More detail in respect of visits to the the Bury St Edmunds and Ipswich Centres is provided in the table below:

Police Investigation Centre visited	No. of Visits	No. of detainees held	No. of detainees available to visit	No. of detainees visited	% of detainees visited (of those available)	No. of detainees not visited*
Bury St Edmunds	49	293	163	146	90%	150
Ipswich	51	332	157	139	89%	188
Total	100	625	320	285	89%	338

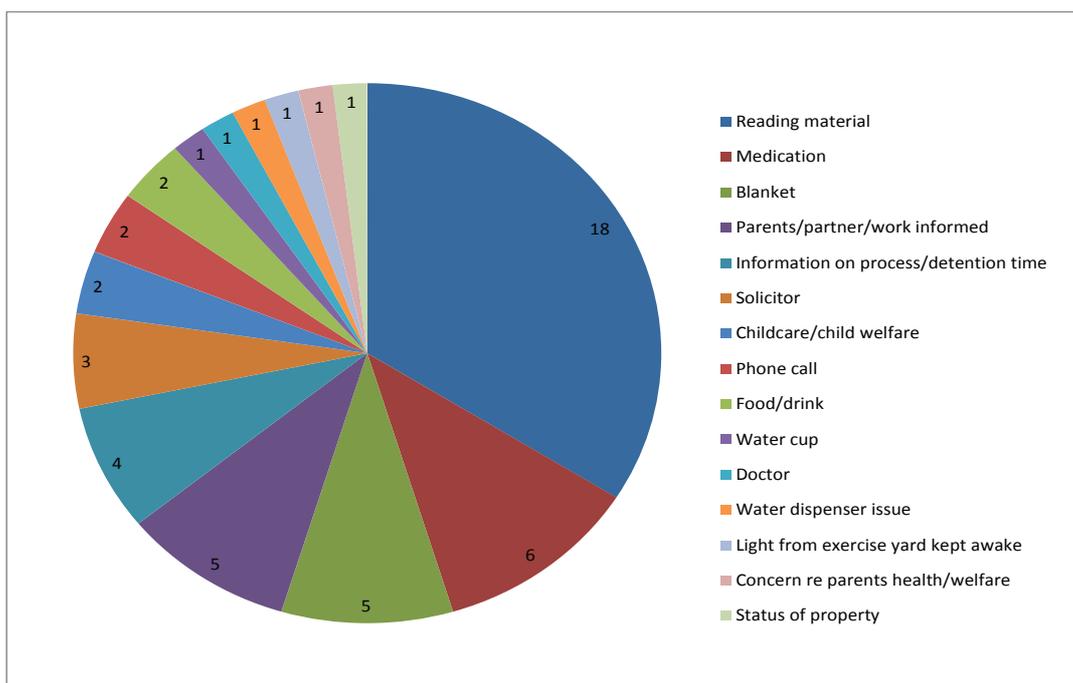
*Note: There are a number of reasons why detained persons are not visited, for example, the police may advise against it for health and safety reasons. The category 'not visited' is broken down in the following pie chart showing the reasons detained persons were not visited during the period. 19% of the detainees not seen were 'not selected by ICVs' themselves as they have focused their time in custody on more in-depth interviews with fewer detainees and scrutiny of their custody records, rather than brief interviews with all detainees held at the time of the visit.

Breakdown of reasons detainees not visited - Total 338 not seen



Issues reported from custody visits

The implementation of the Athena IT system in the last year has resulted in a number of challenges for custody staff. The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and visitors have received regular updates on progress with the system and been assured that measures are being taken to address the issues raised and provide support for staff where necessary. During the past year visitors have also noted concerns regarding the welfare of detainees which have been subsequently addressed by the Force. However, in the main, ICVs have noted that detainees have been cared for appropriately and there were a number of occasions when detainees specifically commented that they were satisfied with their treatment whilst in police custody. As a result of their conversations with detainees the following requests were raised with custody staff and subsequently dealt with:



Activities during 2015/16

The ICVs Panels met on a quarterly basis with the relevant Custody Inspector to discuss visiting data and any issues arising.

Two training events were held jointly with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk during 2015/16 and were well attended by visitors:

November 2015 in Suffolk – Organised with the assistance of Chief Inspector Jo Garrard, Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies and which covered:

- Liaison and Diversion in the Criminal Justice System - Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust, Julian Support and Project Nova
- Detainee Healthcare / G4S Medical Service Provision
- Introduction of Athena

February 2016 in Norfolk – Training facilitated by Anna Jarratt from the Independent Custody Visiting Association and which covered:

- Custody Records / Non-English Speaking Detainees
- Update on Athena - Chief Inspector Jo Garrard, Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies
- Juveniles in Custody

One visitor from Suffolk attended the Independent Custody Visiting Association National Conference in Birmingham – 30 January 2016

Four of the long serving visitors retired during 2015/16 – in December 2015 one having served for 13 years and the other for 8.5 years and in March 2016 one having served for 13 years and the other for 7 years. We hope to recognise their commitment to the Scheme at the forthcoming Constabulary long service awards ceremony.

Conclusion

Custody Visiting continues to be essential in providing independent scrutiny of the treatment of detained persons and the conditions in which they are held. As well as the mutual level of protection it offers, the Scheme helps to build partnerships between the police and the communities they serve, and raise public confidence generally.

If you are interested in becoming an Independent Custody Visitors or would like more information please contact:

The Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Administrator
Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
Police Headquarters
Martlesham Heath
Ipswich IP5 3QS
Telephone: (01473) 782773 or E-mail: spcc@suffolk.pnn.police.uk

For more information on the role of ICVs and that of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk visit www.suffolk-pcc.gov.uk

For more information regarding the role of the Independent Custody Visiting Association visit www.icva.org.uk

If you require the information in the Annual Report in any other format, please contact us.