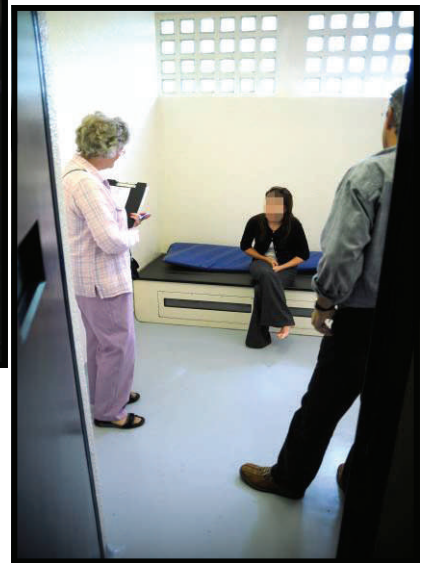


Securing the welfare of detainees



The 2008 Annual Report of Hampshire Police Authority's Independent Custody Visiting scheme

Welcome.....

.....to the first annual report of the Independent Custody Visiting scheme run by Hampshire Police Authority.

The Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) scheme has been run across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight for more than 20 years, and is carried out by volunteers who ensure that detainees in the custody of Hampshire Constabulary are treated fairly, and with dignity and respect.

This annual report looks back at the findings of the scheme in 2008, and outlines the plans for 2009. If you would like further information, please visit www.hampshirepoliceauthority.org.

Words of thanks from.....

Councillor Jacqui Rayment, Chair of Hampshire Police Authority

Our ICV scheme is one we can all be proud of. Hampshire set up the project long before it became a national requirement, and this report demonstrates that it is still as important now as when it was first established.



Detainees have as much right to be treated fairly as any other member of society, and it is when in custody that these people, who are often vulnerable, need our help more than ever. The scheme could not operate without the commitment and support of the volunteers who carry out the visits. They give up their time to help ensure we have one of the best schemes in the country in these fields. On behalf of the Authority, I would like to thank them for their work.

Assistant Chief Constable David Pryde, Hampshire Constabulary

Taking someone's liberty and keeping them in custody is a serious step. The independent custody visitors provide considerable reassurance to both the public and indeed police officers and staff that their presence will ensure that Hampshire Constabulary's reputation is not tarnished by improper practices and unfounded allegations.



It is heartening for me to note that when they do visit a custody centre, they are given unrestricted access to all persons detained. I want to thank all custody volunteers for their efforts and observations on what Hampshire Constabulary officers do well and what we can do better. It is this partnership approach which ultimately protects the interests of all concerned.

Independent Custody Visiting - a snapshot of 2008

At the end of the 2008, there were 58 volunteers trained by Hampshire Police Authority and available to carry out visits to custody facilities in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. This is an increase of three when compared to the same time last year.

Custody visitors are split into four areas: North, South East, South West and Isle of Wight. Volunteers carried out 349 visits to the custody centres in the two counties, interviewing 1082 detainees in total.

Did you know.....

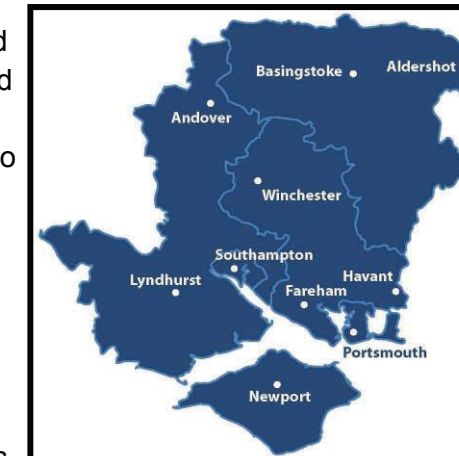
- Detainees are not obliged to accept a visit from custody visitors, but the refusal rate is less than 3%.
- The most number of visits were carried out at Southampton Police Station;
- Volunteers also inspect the custody facilities at St Mary's Stadium in Southampton;
- The largest custody centre is at Portsmouth Police Station, with a maximum of 29 available cells.

What is happening where you live?

North

There were 15 volunteers in the North region at the end of the year. During 2008, volunteers visited 259 detainees at the custody centres at Aldershot, Alton, Andover, Basingstoke, Farnborough and Winchester police stations.

Despite some minor repairs needed, nothing major was found during the course of the year, and volunteers reported that the custody suites were considered to be in reasonable condition bearing in mind their age and usage.



South East

There were 17 volunteers in the South East region at the end of the year. During 2008, volunteers visited 349 detainees at the custody centres at Fareham, Gosport, Havant, Portsmouth and Waterlooville police stations.

The number of volunteers available to carry out custody visits was highlighted as a key issue during the year, but the region continued to make a high number of visits despite this.

South West

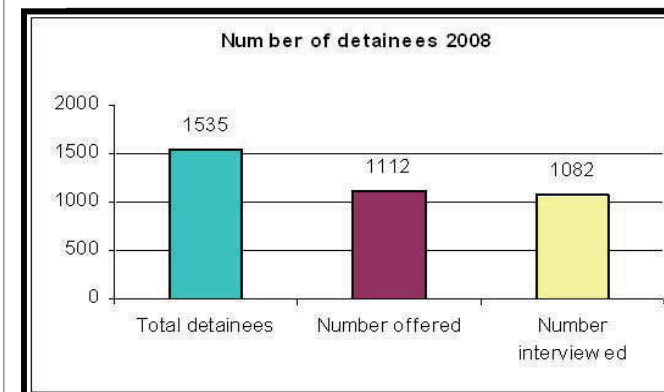
There were 17 volunteers in the South West region at the end of the year. During 2008, volunteers visited 418 detainees at Bitterne, Eastleigh, Lyndhurst and Southampton police stations, and at the custody facilities if operated on match days at St Mary's Stadium in Southampton.

One problem highlighted by custody visitors was a defective boiler at Lyndhurst Police Station, which resulted in a lack of hot water for detainees. The boiler has now been fixed, and is an example of the type of issues that volunteers are trained to look out for.

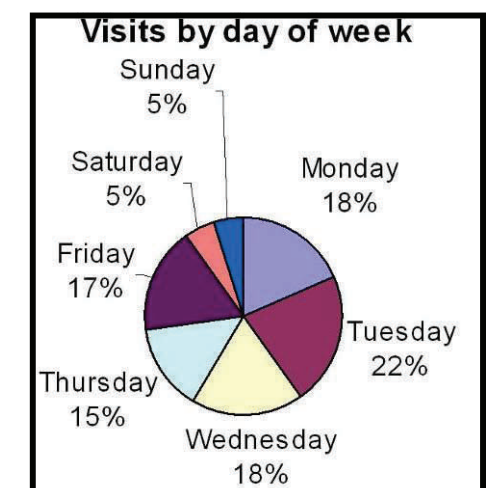
There were nine volunteers in the Isle of Wight region at the end of the year. During 2008, volunteers visited 55 detainees at the custody centres at Newport and Ryde police stations.

One of the responsibilities of custody visitors is to monitor how Hampshire Constabulary officers take care of detainees in custody with mental health problems. Isle of Wight volunteers noted an increase in the number of such detainees during 2008, and complemented officers on the way the detainees were treated.

Isle of Wight



The majority of visits to custody suites take place during the week, but as more people are detained at weekends, the Authority has asked its volunteers to make more visits on Friday and Saturday nights.



Not every detainee in custody is visited by a volunteer. Detainees are not obliged to accept a visit, and there are occasions when it is not possible for a volunteer to see a detainee. The most common reasons include: when the detainee is being interviewed by a solicitor; when they are asleep; or when they are undergoing a process such as having their fingerprints taken.

Looking ahead in 2009

Custody visiting in Hampshire and Isle of Wight continues to be a scheme that is held in high regard by Police Authority members and senior officers within Hampshire Constabulary. However, its success can only continue with the ongoing support and dedication of the volunteers.

Recruitment and retention of volunteers have been highlighted as an issue in all areas. As a result, the Police Authority will be actively looking for new volunteers when attending its public consultation sessions, and will promote the scheme when other opportunities arise.



Custody visiting is a statutory obligation for Police Authorities, and the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) co-ordinates activities on a national level. In April 2009, Hampshire Police Authority rejoined ICVA to take full advantage of national best practice and to access support, advice and training materials.

Learning more about the wider police family

Each year, the Annual Seminar for Hampshire and Isle of Wight volunteers is an opportunity to learn more about the work of other police departments, and to gain greater understanding of how their work fits into the bigger policing picture. As well as receiving an update on the current custody provision within the Hampshire Constabulary area in June 2008, volunteers heard from the Home Office about plans to improve the way the physical and mental wellbeing of detainees is handled. Presentations were also given on the Marine Unit, the Forensic Science Service and the UK Central Authority, which plays a key role in exchanging criminal records between the UK and other EU countries for the purposes of law enforcement.



Volunteers were also given practical demonstrations by the Public Order Unit, with officers showing the range of ways it can restrain non-compliant detainees. The variety of methods used to gain entry to buildings were also shown, and the team concluded with a spectacular demonstration of fire bombs, and how the police protect themselves from their effects.

The next seminar will be held in June 2009 at Netley, and all ICV volunteers are invited to attend. Contact the Police Authority office if you have not already confirmed your attendance.

Could You Volunteer?

Visitors come from all sections of the community. You must be more than 18 years old and reside in Hampshire or the Isle of Wight. No special skills are required as full training and support is provided, but you should be a good listener, non-judgemental, unprejudiced and generally have an interest in the community and the welfare of the people detained in police cells. For more details, please contact us.

Hampshire Police Authority, Westgate Chambers, Staple Gardens, Winchester, Hampshire, SO23 8AW.

Phone: 01962 871595

E-mail: police.authority@hampshire.pnn.police.uk

Web: www.hampshirepoliceauthority.org