

Seminars

Each year the Authority organises a seminar for all its custody visitors which is an opportunity to learn more about the work of Hampshire Constabulary as well as other areas of the criminal justice system. The event is held at the Hampshire Constabulary Southern Support and Training Headquarters at Netley and is also open to visitors from our neighbouring schemes across the south east region.

In 2010, the seminar was held on 20 May when an interesting and varied programme of presentations and demonstrations was provided. The morning session comprised an update on custody provision in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight; preventing death in custody; the work of the specialist operations team in Hampshire Constabulary including observation of officers undergoing their training in the use of TASAR. In the

afternoon, Ian Smith OBE, Chief Executive of ICVA, outlined the role of custody visitors in relation to human rights, challenging them to go the extra mile by asking more searching questions.



The 2011 seminar will be held again at Netley on 30 June 2011 and all custody visitors will be invited to attend.

Could You Volunteer?

Visitors come from all sections of the community. They must be more than 18 years old and reside or work in Hampshire or the Isle of Wight. No special skills are required as full training and support is provided, however Custody Visitors should be good listeners, non-judgemental, unprejudiced



and generally have an interest in the community and the welfare of the people detained in police cells.

Serving or former police officers, special constables and members of the Probation Service are not eligible to become custody visitors. This is to prevent a potential conflict of interest for the individual and to maintain the independence of the Scheme as a whole.

If you would be interested and would like more details, please contact us.

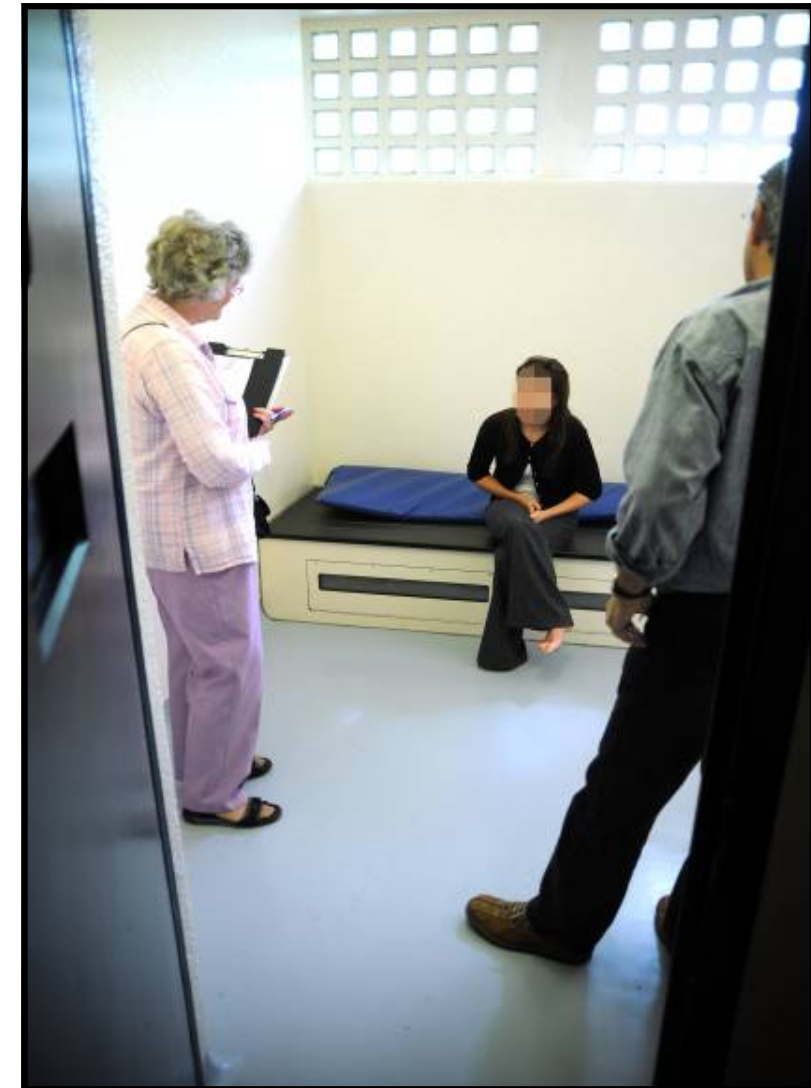
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Securing the welfare of detainees



The 2010 Annual Report of Hampshire Police Authority's Independent Custody Visiting scheme

Words of thanks from.....

Councillor Jacqui Rayment, Chair of Hampshire Police Authority

The ICV scheme was introduced in the 1980's and our ICV scheme is one we should all be proud of. Hampshire set up the project long before it became a national requirement and I am pleased to be celebrating 25 years of the ICV scheme in 2011.

Detainees have as much right to be treated fairly as any other member of society. 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 unannounced visits. We are very grateful that they give up their time to help ensure we have one of the best schemes in the country. On behalf of the Authority, I was delighted to be able to present long service certificates and thank ICVs who attended a reception in March 2010.



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.



Welcome

This is the second annual report for the Independent Custody Visiting scheme run by Hampshire Police Authority for the year 2010.

This annual report looks back over what happened during 2010 and looks forward to 2011. If you would like further information about the scheme, please visit our website www.hampshirepoliceauthority.org.

Looking ahead

Restructuring

The restructuring of custody provision by Hampshire Constabulary will be a major factor in the operation of the custody visiting panels. As smaller custody suites are closed, the Authority will need to look at the frequency of visits to each suite which is dependent upon the throughput of detainees. The busiest suites (Portsmouth, Southampton and Newport) are visited once a week, some suites are visited three times a month but quieter suites are only visited once a month. Some adjustments will be necessary as Hampshire Constabulary rationalises its custody estate.

Southampton Operational Command Centre

The most exciting thing which is going to happen in 2011 is the opening of the 36 cell facility at the new Southampton Operational Command Centre. This will be a phased, opening in March and as a result, Eastleigh custody suite will close. Custody Visitors have had two opportunities to visit the new facility, once under construction and again in February when the suite was fully completed but not yet operational. The facilities for both detainees and the officers and staff who will be working there are first class. Custody visitors even have their own entrance! The South West panel is currently working out how it will arrange visits to such a large facility.

25th Anniversary

This scheme has been in existence in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight since 1986 and 2011 will be our 25th anniversary. To mark this occasion, the Chair of the Authority will be hosting a reception for all our volunteers and their guests in April which will be an opportunity to celebrate the many hours of service given over the past 25 years and to present long service

awards. There will be seven people receiving 25 year service awards at this event.

The success of this scheme is entirely dependent upon the dedication and commitment of the volunteers who carry out the role. Although some volunteers stay in the scheme for many years, some move on after a relatively short time so we are always looking for new volunteers to join us.

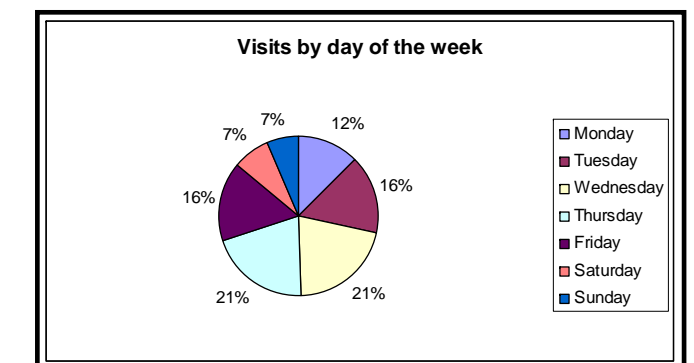
Training

It is imperative that our volunteers are properly equipped to carry out the role we expect of them. New recruits are given an initial one day training, which covers the basics. However, all volunteers agree that their training actually starts when they carry out their first visit. In 2010 Hampshire Police Authority provided two training days.

The Authority is pleased to also provide an hours input on custody visiting to the training undertaken by all new custody sergeants.

Panel meetings

All custody visitors are encouraged to attend their quarterly panel meetings which are a very useful opportunity meet up with colleagues and to learn what has been going on during other visits. These meetings are generally well attended and the support of Hampshire Constabulary's Custody Manager and local inspectors at these meetings is much appreciated.



What is happening where you live?

As well as speaking to detainees to check that they have been offered food, drink and blankets, custody visitors also ensure that any religious or cultural requirements have been met. They also check other areas of the custody suite – the toilets and shower facilities, the blanket stock and the food and drink supplies.

North panel

There were 17 visitors on the North panel at the end of the year. During 2010 they visited a total of 275 detainees who were held in Aldershot, Alton, Andover, Basingstoke and Winchester custody suites. Although, Alton was only used at weekends before being closed completely towards the

end of the year. Winchester was closed for a week in the later part of the year for a re-fit.

The visitors noted that considering the age of many of the buildings, the overall condition of the facilities are good. The panel feels it

continues to enjoy a good working relationship with the officers and staff in the custody suites who are always willing to sort out any minor problems which have been identified. Hampshire Constabulary are considering changing the meals provided for detainees from hot meals to pies, pasties and sandwiches and during the trial period at Winchester, custody visitors passed on to custody staff the comments they received from detainees.

South West panel

There were 16 visitors on the South West panel at the end of the year who had visited a total of 407 detainees held at Eastleigh, Lyndhurst and Southampton custody suites. The panel's long serving convenor retired in

September and we wish him well and thank him for all his hard-work and effort over the past 16 years. The panel looks forward to facing the challenge of visiting the new custody facility at Southampton under a new leadership. During the year the visitors reported small malfunctions of lights, toilets and heating at the old Southampton suite and whilst some were addressed, it was acknowledged that others would not be due to the closure of the suite in early 2011.

South East panel

In 2010 there were 24 visitors who carried out a total of 125 visits to 421 detainees held in Fareham, Gosport, Portsmouth and Waterlooville. Gosport was only open at

weekends and will be closed completely in April 2011. The convenor of the panel commented that he leads a team of committed people. The panel had no major concerns to report other than some cells being out of action awaiting minor

repairs and some problems with the supplies of blankets. As a result of a report from this panel that some police officers did not seem to understand the role of custody visitors, a fact sheet has been prepared which is now included in the training packs given to all newly recruited officers.

Isle of Wight panel

There were 10 visitors on the panel who carried out 28 visits to Newport custody suite during the year. They spoke to 64 detainees during these visits with no detainees refusing - custody visitors are rightly proud of this 100% record. Graffiti which was reported was painted over and the cells were generally found to be clean; some blankets which were found without the correct safety markings were pointed out and subsequently destroyed.



Independent Custody visiting

What is custody visiting?

Under the Police Reform Act 2002, all police authorities are required to run a custody visiting scheme. Custody visitors are trained volunteer members of the public who visit police custody suites and speak to people held in custody to ensure they have been fairly treated in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act.

The scheme independently checks on the welfare of detainees at a time when they may be feeling vulnerable or confused and gives the public reassurance that detainees are treated fairly. Serious concerns about detainee welfare raised by custody visitors

are investigated by the Police Authority and the Constabulary

When was it introduced and why?

Custody visiting was introduced following a period of civil disorder in 1981. In some major cities across the UK hundreds of young people attacked property and the police in protest about oppressive policing and alleged harassment of young black people. This indicated a lack of trust in law and order authorities. As a result of this custody visiting (originally called "lay" visiting) was established to increase public confidence in the police.

Custody visiting in Hampshire

What happened in Hampshire in 2010?

At the end of 2010 there were 67 trained volunteers available to carry out visits to the 13 custody facilities maintained by Hampshire Constabulary across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. This is five more than at the end of 2009.

During the year 12 new recruits were trained by Hampshire Police Authority, however, unfortunately six people left the scheme and one long serving member died.

During the year custody visitors carried out 338 visits to persons detained in police custody across 13 locations. During these visits a total of 1,666 people were detained and custody visitors were able to speak to

1,187 people. Some 'detained persons' are not available to speak to custody visitors for a variety of reasons (for example they might be being interviewed by the investigating officer or on their 8 hours statutory rest period) but of those available, almost 97% were willing to speak to custody visitors. However, this is only a snapshot as custody visitors only speak to 2.2% of the total number of people detained.

