

**If this were
you ...**



**wouldn't you want
someone to check
on your welfare?**

INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING SCHEME

ANNUAL REPORT 2009/10

Introduction

The Independent Custody Visiting Scheme enables members of the public to make unannounced visits to people held in police custody and check that the rules governing their welfare are being observed by the police.

Role of the Authority

Dorset Police Authority has a statutory duty to administer an Independent Custody Visiting Scheme and has overall responsibility for supporting the Scheme.

Independent Custody Visitors



All custody visitors are volunteers appointed by the Police Authority and their role is to look, listen and observe and to report back on their findings. The Scheme plays an important part in maintaining police accountability to the local community.

Custody visitors 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. Dorset Police Authority maintains the Scheme with an Independent Custody Visiting Panel consisting of between 25 and 30 visitors.

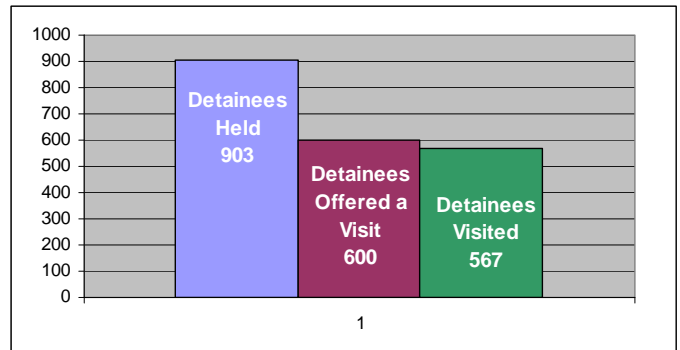
How the Scheme Operates in Dorset

Dorset has three 24 hour police custody suites located in Bournemouth, Poole and Weymouth. Each of these suites is visited on a weekly basis. The remaining nine non 24 hour suites are visited on a quarterly basis.

Panel meetings take place every quarter and are attended by custody visitors, Force personnel with responsibility for custody and representatives from the Police Authority, including the lead member with responsibility for custody.

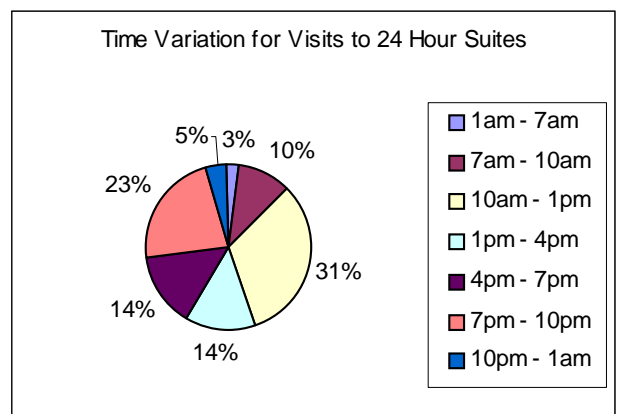
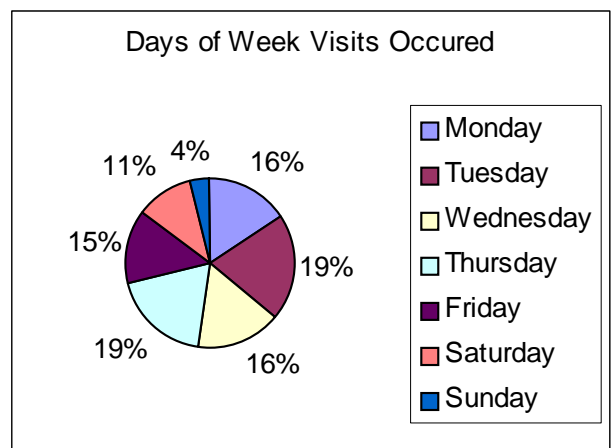
Visiting Statistics

Between 1 April 2009 and 31 March 2010 a total of 178 visits were made. The chart below indicates that at the time of those visits, there were a total of 903 people being detained in custody. A total of 600 detainees were offered a visit and of those 567 (94.5%) detainees were seen.



It should be noted that, as a matter of course, there are some detainees who are unavailable to receive a visit. These include detainees who are being interviewed, are unwell or those within their statutory 8 hour sleep period.

The following charts show the variation in the days of the week when visits have taken place to all custody suites and the variation in times when visits have occurred in 24 hour suites.



In the course of visits, the most common requests either raised by detainees or noted by the visitors were as follows:

- Request for medical attention / medication
- Explanation requested for custody log entry
- Food/drink supply
- Requests for food/drink/clothing/blankets
- Conditions of suite / certain cell
- Temperature of cell
- Request for phone call
- Request for someone to be informed

Recruitment Campaign 2010

The 2010 recruitment campaign started in February. In order to provide further information to potential applicants we held two information events both of which were very well attended. To reach the widest audience possible adverts were placed in local newspapers, regular press releases were issued and over 700 posters were sent out to a wide variety of places, including post offices, community groups and parish councils. Over 80 application packs were requested.

We received 29 application forms and subsequently interviewed 17 applicants. Of those applicants 6 were offered an immediate position of the Scheme and another 7 were placed on a reserve list. We will be giving a warm welcome to the new visitors at the Panel meeting in July.

Publication of Dorset Independent Custody Visiting Scheme

During the last year, significant work has taken place to update and properly document the Dorset Police Authority Independent Custody Visiting Scheme. The original Dorset Lay Visiting Scheme was established by the Police Committee on 25 September 1986 and has been developed over a number of years. However, until now the Scheme has never been fully documented.

The updated and documented Scheme represents a key source of reference for the Authority and comprehensive guidance for Independent Custody Visitors and was approved by the Police Authority in February 2010. The Scheme will provide a valuable source of information for all custody visitors and will provide a single point of reference on a wide range of topics relevant to the Dorset Scheme. These include the roles and responsibilities of key personnel, visiting procedures and associated key policies.

The Scheme will be published on the Dorset Police Authority website, www.dpa.police.uk

Training and Conferences

The Police Authority arranges training to Independent Custody Visitors to ensure that their knowledge is kept up to date.

A total of 18 custody visitors attended refresher training on Saturday 7 November 2009. The training was delivered by the Chair of the ICV Panel in conjunction with the Scheme Administrator with a focus on issues raised locally.

The annual conference of the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) was held at the Ramada Jarvis Hotel in Leicester on 14 November 2009. The conference was attended by almost 300 delegates consisting of independent custody visitors, scheme administrators, police authority members and officers. Four visitors and the Scheme Administrator from Dorset attended the conference.

Changes and Developments

Joint Emergency Services Building, Poole



This project including the provision of a 28 cell capacity custody centre, together with police station, property stores, and office accommodation for both Police and Fire & Rescue Personnel was handed over to the Authority in early December 2009. This new Custody Centre replaces the 16 cell facility on the old Civic Centre site and significantly improves both the standard and capacity of custody facilities for the Poole conurbation. Prior to the opening on 16 December 2009, the Force invited Custody Visitors to take part in an orientation visit of the new custody suite.

Bournemouth Custody Suite

This scheme involves the construction and commissioning of a 34 cell capacity custody centre and combined reception point for the site. The building will adjoin the existing Divisional Headquarters and replace the existing 18 cell facility to the south of Madeira Road. The new Custody Centre has been designed in compliance with the 2005 Home Office Design Guide for Custody Suites and will significantly improve both the standard and capacity of custody facilities at Bournemouth.

The contract commenced in early February 2009 and is on target for completion in the Autumn of 2010.

Role of ICVA

The Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) is a voluntary organisation that promotes custody visiting nationally. The Association provides support and advice to police authorities in respect of the administration of the Scheme as well as training for visitors.

The ICVA work with the Home Office, the Association of Police Authorities (APA) and police authorities to identify and promote best practice and increase public understanding and awareness of the Scheme.

Dorset Police



The Police Authority works closely with the Force to ensure the scheme operates efficiently and effectively and that any issues that arise are addressed.

Quarterly Panel meetings are attended by the Assistant Chief Constable (Operations), the Divisional Commander for the Criminal Justice Division (CJD) and senior custody personnel. This enables any issues or concerns to be raised, discussed and addressed.

In terms of supporting the day-to-day operation of the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme, the police are required to allow visitors immediate access to the custody area. A delay is only permitted if immediate access would put visitors in danger. Visitors must also be given access to custody areas and facilities, including food preparation areas and medical rooms. A custody officer must accompany visitors throughout their visits and be aware of any potential health and safety risks to the visitors.

Conclusion

In administering this Independent Custody Visiting Scheme, Dorset Police Authority's key mission is to support the maintenance of proper standards of detainee treatment and welfare in the County.

The 2009/10 year has seen important developments in the Police Authority's Independent Custody Visiting Scheme. These include the introduction of an updated and fully documented Scheme, a highly successful recruitment campaign and the opening of new modern custody facilities in Poole last year with new facilities at Bournemouth due to open later this year.

Ultimately, however, the key to the ultimate success of our Scheme lies in the commitment of the volunteer Independent Custody Visitors and the Authority thanks them all for their hard work and dedication.

Further Information

Please contact Dorset Police Authority for any further information. Details of the Scheme can be found on our website www.dpa.police.uk

Dorset Police Authority
Force Headquarters
Winfrith
Dorchester
DT2 8DZ

Tel: 01202 223966

The Chief Executive can be contacted by emailing: martin.goscomb@dorset.pnn.police.uk

The Scheme Administrator can be contacted by emailing: yvonne.fenwick@dorset.pnn.police.uk

For more information regarding the role of the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA), please visit their website www.icva.org.uk