

Independent Custody Visitor

Independent Custody Visitors are volunteers from the local community who, as part of a team, make unannounced visits to police custody suites where people have been arrested and are being held. They monitor how people held in custody are being treated and feedback to the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Independent Custody Visitors must be over 18 years old and have no direct involvement in the criminal justice system. If you'd like to join Cambridgeshire's Independent Custody Visitor Scheme, please complete an application form or get in contact with Alasdair Baker, Volunteer Co-ordinator for more details:

Email: Alasdair.baker@cambs.pnn.police.uk

Tel: 0300 333 3456

Or take a look at our webpage – <http://www.cambridgeshire-pcc.gov.uk/volunteer-schemes/>

When?

Independent Custody Visitors usually carry out one or two visits a month. However, the amount of time you need to give depends on the area your team covers and travel times. As well as the visits, there are regular team meetings and training events. Team meetings are usually held quarterly and training events normally take place twice a year.

Where?

You will visit custody suites in Cambridgeshire. There are currently two custody visiting teams in Cambridgeshire who each visit designated police station in their area. The north group visit custody suites in Peterborough, March and Huntingdon. The south group visit custody suites in Cambridge and St Neots.

What?

Independent Custody Visitors make unannounced visits to police stations to check on the rights, health, wellbeing and treatment of detainees. Independent Custody Visitors must be independent and impartial when they visit. They look, listen and tell the Police and Crime Commissioner what they have found in the custody area. If someone is being held in custody, the Custody Visitors must get the detainee's permission to talk to them or to see their custody record. If the detainee gives permission, Custody Visitors talk to them to find out how they have been treated and whether they have been able to access their rights and entitlements.

After each visit, Independent Custody Visitors write a report, which tells the Police and Crime Commissioner how the police are running the custody area at the time of the visit. The Independent Custody Visitors give copies of the report to the Police and Crime Commissioner and the police, and they keep a copy for themselves. The Police and Crime Commissioner uses the

information in the report to decide what action needs to be taken. Each year the Police and Crime Commissioner publishes a report on Independent Custody Visitors' work.

Independent Custody Visitors must keep what they see and hear on their visits confidential.

Could this be you?

Whatever skills you already have you will be able to put them to use in a completely new environment. A genuine concern for the welfare of others is essential. You'll need to keep things confidential and have the time to carry out visits, which can take place at any time of the day/night. Being impartial, responsible and patient is also important, as is the ability to work as part of a team and communicate effectively.

What can you expect from us?

An opportunity to make a real difference to the welfare of people in custody. We will also provide an opportunity for training and development on a personal level.

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner provides a one-day training course for new volunteers. Independent Custody Visitors need to know and understand the responsibilities of the police and the rights of the people in custody.

The training programme is made up of exercises covering everything about custody visiting and tells you the basic principles of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. It also includes guidelines on custody visiting.

When the Police and Crime Commissioner has placed you in a team, we will put you with an experienced Custody Visitor who will go on visits with you and guide you through your first few visits. We arrange more training sessions locally to tell you about new developments and share experiences. When you first become a Custody Visitor, you will have a six-month trial period and once confirmed in post, your role will be on a three-year tenure.

What next?

If you want to become a Custody Visitor, you must fill out an application form and attend an interview. After we have interviewed you, we will draw up a list of suitable volunteers to fill any vacancies, which may come up over the next year. Therefore, even if you are successful at the interview, we may not be able to offer you a place on the scheme straight away.

The Police and Crime Commissioner is committed to equal opportunities in managing the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme and welcomes applications from eligible candidates irrespective of their religious belief, political opinion, gender, disability, age, race, marital status, sexuality or whether they have dependants or not. As young people and people from minority

ethnic communities are currently under-represented in our custody visiting teams, we particularly welcome applications from these groups. However, all candidates will be selected on merit. If your application is successful, the Police and Crime Commissioner will decide which Custody Visiting team you will join. When we choose which team to place you in, we try to make sure that the team is reflective of the local community. Therefore, we may give some people priority to create a balance between men and women, community background and age.

Because of the sensitive nature of custody visiting, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner will check your background. We will not appoint you unless you meet all the conditions of our selection process, which includes a relevant security check and satisfactory references.

For more information

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Custody visiting has its own support organisation, the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) and you can get more information on their website at www.icva.org.uk