



# CAMBRIDGESHIRE POLICE AUTHORITY

## **Independent Custody Visitors' Annual Report 2011-2012**

### **Introduction**

Cambridgeshire Police Authority has a statutory duty, under the Police Reform Act 2002, to establish and maintain a scheme which serves to ensure:

- the rights and entitlements of detainees are being met;
- the conditions in which the detainees are held are adequate;
- detainees are treated fairly by officers and staff

### **What is an Independent Custody Visitor?**

Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) are members of the local community who volunteer to make unannounced visits, in pairs, to police stations to check and report on the treatment and wellbeing of detainees.

ICVs are recruited by the Police Authority, but are independent of both the Police Authority and the Constabulary.

The volunteers come from various backgrounds and sections of the community but cannot have any other involvement with the Criminal Justice System, for example: the police, courts or prison service.

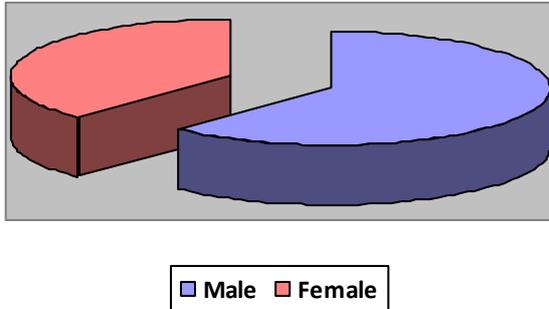
This is in order to maintain the integrity of the scheme. ICVs must be impartial and independent in order to make informed judgements in which the community can have confidence.

### **Structure of the Scheme in Cambridgeshire**

As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012, there were 37 volunteers serving the Independent Custody Visitors' Scheme across Cambridgeshire. Gender and age demographics are available in the charts on the next page.

The Scheme, which is divided into three panels, undertakes visits across six custody suites; Thorpe Wood, March, St Neot's, Huntingdon, Ely (now closed) and Parkside.

### Gender Demographics 2011-12



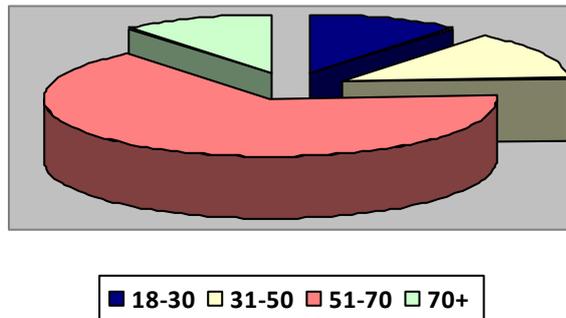
The Constabulary also has access to the shared custody facilities available at the PIC (Police Investigation Centre) in Kings Lynn.

As the PIC is located in Norfolk, Cambridgeshire detainees who are held there are visited by Norfolk ICVs.

The Scheme is supported by an Administrator based at the Police Authority, with each local panel nominating a chairman who is responsible for co-ordinating the visitors' rota and chairing quarterly meetings

Each panel makes one visit a week to their respective custody suites, with the exception of Ely, St Neot's and March, which the panels visit once every two weeks because these suites are not routinely used for detention.

### Age Demographics 2011-12



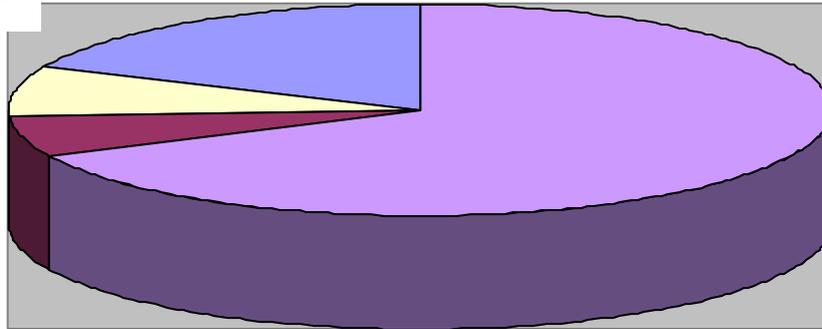
Each ICV reports on observations made during their visit, which are then sent to the chairmen, Divisional Custody Manager and the Scheme Administrator.

Particular issues or trends are noted by the chairmen and Scheme Administrator, and subsequently scrutinised at local level, within panel meetings, and at a higher level, within committee structure of the Authority.

This is done through the Authority's Custody Visitors' Panel, which considers emerging themes or concerns surrounding custody, scrutinises the performance of the Scheme, and ensures that any necessary follow up action is completed.



## Visit Demographics 2011 -12



Accepted Refused Asleep Other

Since March 2010, Cambridgeshire ICVs have been practising 'Self-introduction', where ICVs introduce themselves to the detained person, as opposed to the custody staff making an introduction for them.

Self-introduction allows ICVs to portray themselves in a more visibly independent way, to reduce potential confusion over their involvement with the police.

This is particularly important to detainees who come from communities where there is a high level of distrust between the public and police.

**“Over the last year, self-introduction has proved to be a success, increasing the number of all detainees including non-English speaking, who accept visits”.**

The chart on the next page shows the statistics for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012.

The ICVs carry out their role with a view to providing the Police Authority (and in turn the local community) with assurance that anyone held in police custody is treated fairly and their human rights are respected.

The Scheme provides transparency and confidence that the police are acting in accordance with the legislation governing the treatment of detainees - the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984. ICVs play a vital role in raising standards in custody and ensuring the welfare and fair treatment of detainees.

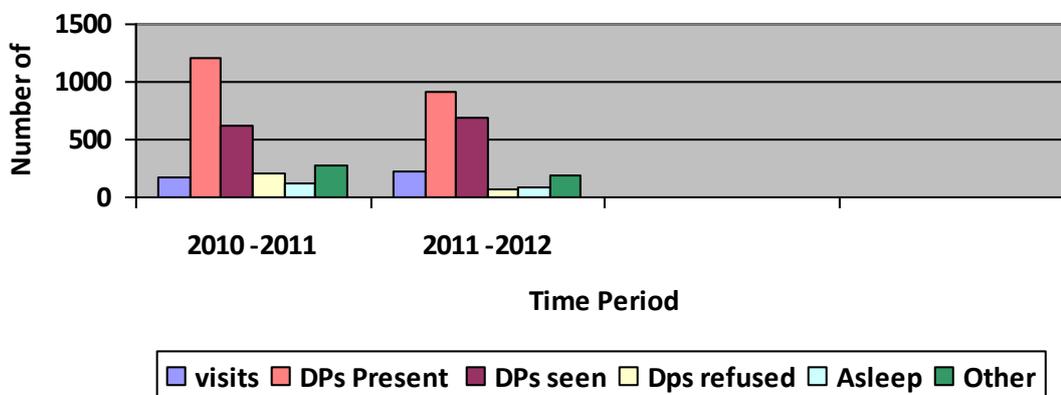
### Visits made by ICVs

Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012, a total of 217 visits were made across the six custody suites.

914 persons were detained in custody at the time visits were conducted; of those, 682 detainees were seen, and 61 refused a visit.

The chart below shows a contrast of the number of visits accepted and refused over the last two years

Statistic Comparison 2010-2012



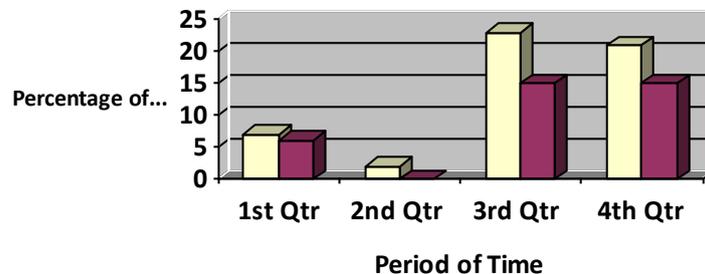
Although ICVs act in the best interests of the detainees; detainees are not obliged to speak to ICVs or accept a visit; occasionally ICVs may be advised against visiting a particular detainee on health and safety grounds.

In these cases, they may be given the opportunity to view the detainee through the hatch to satisfy themselves of the detainee's welfare.

The pie chart on the next page shows the breakdown of visits accepted, refused, asleep, or otherwise unable to be conducted.



## Non-English Speaking Detainee Statistics 2011-12



□ Non - English Speaking DPs Present ■ Non -English Speaking DPs Seen

### Main issues arising from visits

Cambridgeshire Police Authority is pleased to note that improvements have been made on issues arising from visits in the previous year, and that ICVs reported positively on the accommodating approach and professionalism of custody staff across the county.

Some of the key issues that were identified by ICVs during their visits in this period included:

- Cleaning standards
- Collection delays for those persons detained for immigration issues i.e. for reasons other than by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE)
- General repairs and maintenance
- Mental Health provisions and assessments

These issues were raised at local panel meetings and taken to the Authority's Custody Visitors' Panel quarterly meetings for discussion with the Constabulary's senior officers.

The Constabulary has been continually monitoring and improving the cleaning standards of cells, and making improvements to the facilities through refurbishment, most notably at Parkside.

The Constabulary's senior officers have addressed issues relating to collection delays for immigration detainees through contact with the United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA), with continual monitoring and imposing fines for such delays.

The Scheme has seen a great reduction during this period in the number of detainees held under Section 136 of the Mental Health Act, as a result of new S.136 protocols for detainees which require mental health assessments to be conducted outside of custody suites.

## **The transition to Police and Crime Commissioners**

On 15<sup>th</sup> November 2012, local elections will be held in Cambridgeshire, and across the 41 force areas, to elect the first Police and Crime Commissioners.

The Commissioner for Cambridgeshire will take office on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November, when the Police Authority will cease to exist.

Although based at Police Headquarters, the Commissioner will be a separate corporation to the Chief Constable.

As the local policing body, the Commissioner will take over the responsibilities of the Authority, including the administration of the ICV Scheme.

It is anticipated that whilst the Scheme and volunteers will not be adversely affected by the transition, some changes do lie ahead.

As the Scheme aims to promote transparency between the Constabulary and local communities, it will be important to ensure continued public access to the relevant information throughout the transition process. T

The Authority is currently considering the options available to meet these responsibilities.

Further information on the Police and Crime Commissioner can be found on the Authority's website

[www.cambs-pa.gov.uk](http://www.cambs-pa.gov.uk)

## **Report from Cambridgeshire Police Authority Custody Visitors' Panel Chairman**

"I take great pleasure, once again, in contributing to the annual report of the Independent Custody Visitors' Scheme.

The ICVs continue to sustain the excellent work they carry out in conducting unannounced visits to the Constabulary's custody facilities to ensure all detainees get the highest standard of care.

In recent years our custody provision has had two HMIC visits and on each occasion the work of ICVs was praised in the inspection reports. I

I have had the pleasure of attending meetings of each of the three panels and have been most impressed with the attendance and contributions of ICVs.

The panel chairs attend the Authority's Independent Custody Visitors' Panel meetings, providing minutes of their individual meetings and reports of visits carried out by ICVs.

These act as catalysts for ensuring appropriate action is taken to address any issues of concern to the ICVs.

I know both the Constabulary and Authority value the unpaid work undertaken by the ICVs acting as excellent critical friends.

The three panel chairs provide valuable ongoing support to all ICVs and work closely with the Authority's ICV scheme co-ordinator."

Ansar Ali, Chairman of the Custody Visitors Panel, Cambridgeshire Police Authority



## Reports from Independent Custody Visitor Panel Chairmen

### **Cambridge Panel Chairman: Peter Kerswell**

“During the past year the Cambridge Independent Custody Visitors’ Panel has worked well, especially with Self Introduction by all members.

Sadly we lost a valuable member, who died at the end of 2011.

We have recruited four new members who have taken up their posts.

This brings the number of people on the panel to 12.

In 2011 three members attended the Regional Conference at Wymondham.

At the beginning of 2012 four members visited the new Police Investigation Centre at Kings Lynn.

We look forward to an interesting year ahead.”

### **Peterborough Panel**

#### **Chairman: Andrew Wilcox**

“The Peterborough and Fenland Independent Custody Visitors visit the custody suites at Thorpe Wood in Peterborough and March.

March custody facility has been largely unused over the last year but remains as the reserve for the

It has been used to provide cover for special operations and when other custody suites are closed to enable refurbishment/repairs to be undertaken.

March is maintained so that it is available for use within 24 hours notice if required.

ICVs visit the facility monthly to establish that it is fit for use if required.

Thorpe Wood is the largest custody suite in the county with 29 cells and has the largest number of detainees.

ICVs have reported a number of issues with the heating/ventilation system throughout the year.

The Panel is pleased to note that action is now being taken following the publication of the Bradley Report with regard to people with mental health or learning disabilities in the criminal justice system.

We feel that detention in custody for many vulnerable people is not suitable as a "place of safety". The Panel is pleased to report that there have been no observed breaches of the Police & Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) during our visits.

## Reports from Cambridgeshire ICV Panel Chairmen contd

### Huntingdon Panel Chairman: Tom Quilligan

“Members of the Huntingdon Independent Custody Visitors Panel visit the custody facilities at Huntingdon and St. Neot’s police stations.

Membership of the Panel during the year is usually 12, who each make a visit approximately once every six weeks.

Vacancies arise on the Panel from time to time and the Panel is very welcoming to new members.

The Panel meets together once every quarter to discuss visits made and broader custody related matters.

The Panel continues to be strongly supported in its work by the Constabulary and the Police Authority.

Sixty three visits were made to custody blocks during the year.

Visitors were pleased to have interviewed 109 of the 182 (60%) detainees present during their visits.

These figures show an improvement of 19% over the previous year.

This may be as a result of the adoption of self-introduction during this period.

The Panel is satisfied that a high standard of care continues to be delivered by a conscientious custody team.

The Panel is pleased to record that the public can have confidence that the requirements of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act are being fully met in Huntingdon and St. Neot’s

With the election of the new Police and Crime Commissioner later this year, the Panel reassures the public that the diligent members of the Custody Visitors Panel will continue to check on the treatment of detainees in police custody, and the conditions in which they are held”.



## Comments from Deputy Chief Constable John Feavour

The last few months have seen a number of changes to custody within the Constabulary, with the new centralised custody structure.

During the year the custody training programme has been reviewed to reflect the revised Safer Detention and Handling of Persons in Custody Manual which came into effect in November.

In April 2011 refresher training was introduced to ensure custody officers maintained their knowledge of legislation and practical application of powers.

Restorative Justice was also included in this training.

Although no new custody officers have been trained during this year, a good cadre of trained officers remains available for deployment including resilience to enable standby facilities to be staffed when required.

The main emphasis going forward is the new management system of centralised custody, and a body of dedicated custody staff to provide greater expertise in the management and care of detained persons.

Following Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary (HMIC) and Her Majesty's Inspector of Prisons (HMIP) inspection of the Constabulary's custody suites in 2011, a custody action plan was produced including a number of recommendations and housekeeping points to improve custody.

In May 2011, the joint Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire Police Investigation Centre (PIC), based in Kings Lynn was opened. Cambridgeshire has a contract allowing up to 1,900 detainees a year to be accommodated at the facility.

It has now been operational for one year, during which a total of 1,808 detainees from Cambridgeshire were taken there (92 less than contracted).

On 6<sup>th</sup> May 2009, Jonathan Pluck died whilst in the custody of Cambridgeshire Constabulary. His death was subject to an Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) independent investigation. The outcome of the investigation was such that one officer received management guidance in respect of good practice and supervision; another officer was found to have no case to answer.

## **Deputy Chief Constable John Feavour's Comments contd**

Now that the IPCC investigation is complete, a coroner's hearing has taken place, with 12 officers being identified as witnesses. A piece of equipment was identified as unsuitable during the investigation.

This particular type of equipment was immediately withdrawn from circulation and use, and a new safer version was introduced.

Coroners now have an enhanced power under the amended Rule 43 of the Coroners Rules 1984 to write to a person or organisation where the Coroner believes that action should be taken to prevent future deaths.

New Mental Health Protocols have been fully implemented across the Constabulary, which define clearly the process and boundaries involved in detaining individuals held under Section 136 of the Mental Health Act.

As a result, there has been a significant decrease in the number of mental health assessments being conducted within custody suites, and a decrease in the number of individuals being held under Section 136.

More recently, the Constabulary has also introduced a trial scheme in conjunction with the Samaritans to provide support to those who are most vulnerable whilst in custody and post-custody.

To conclude, I would like to extend a warm welcome to the newly trained custody visitors, and to thank the volunteers across the three panels in assisting the Constabulary in undertaking the role of Independent Custody Visitors.

Their work is essential in providing reassurance to local communities that detainees are treated with sensitivity, integrity and respect, and in accordance with PACE, and that the custody suites are maintained to a satisfactory standard.

The Constabulary highly values the work and support of these volunteers and wishes to continue with the positive and engaging relationship we share.

## **News 2011-2012**

### **Recruitment of ICVs**

At the beginning of the year, ten new volunteers were recruited across the three panels.

The new recruits will bring additional diversity and experience to the Scheme, and offer fresh insight and scrutiny to the role of custody visiting.

### **HMIC/HMIP Inspections**

HMIC/HMIP conducted an inspection of the Constabulary's custody suites in May 2011 and made a number of recommendations on the basis of their findings.

To date, 79% of the main recommendations have been completed, and 98% of the housekeeping points have been addressed.

This has been evidenced by the ICVs reports of improved or refurbished facilities in the custody suites.

### **Samaritans Scheme**

Parkside Police Station has pioneered an agreement with the Samaritans, to support detainees who are suffering from mental health issues or require emotional support whilst they are in custody and after they leave.

The custody staff undertake a risk assessment to determine if the detainee requires this support. If required, they then contact the Samaritans who will make a visit during detention, or accept a referral, post-custody.

### **Flashcards**

In Cambridgeshire alone, there are more than 100 different languages spoken. In February 2012, 'flashcards' were produced and placed in all six custody suites, to aid ICVs in communicating with non-English speaking detainees.

The flashcards operate in 18 different languages, and include the top six languages spoken across each county in the Eastern Region.

### **ICVA National Conference**

The National Conference will take place on Saturday, 20<sup>th</sup> October 2012 in Bristol.