



City of London

Independent Custody Visiting Scheme

Annual Report

May 2016

Foreword

The City of London Independent Custody Visiting scheme has had a very successful year. We have recently completed a major recruitment campaign appointing eight new ICV members to our scheme. Four of them are now fully trained and are keen to embark on their custody visits. They will be shadowing our more experienced colleagues on their visits in June 2016. They provide a fresh and innovative approach both in terms of their contribution to our Panel meetings and during their custody visits. The Panel continues to operate at full strength and we will look to broaden its remit in the forthcoming year.

The City Police Force main custody suite is located at Bishopsgate Police Station. The second custody suite at Snow Hill Police Station is now only used as an alternative resource or as an overflow facility. Therefore, our visits are limited to when there is a necessity.

Our working relationship with the custody staff has been largely cordial although we had a period of disruption to some of our visits – when the national security threat was raised in the autumn of 2015. Long standing Members have been re-vetted and are in the process of receiving new passes. While the vetting processes were very efficient – the service provided by the Force’s shared service has been very slow. There remains a lack of clarity about the visitors’ rights of access to the Bishopsgate custody suite. The new arrangements were supposed to provide greater flexibility for the Custody Visitor in terms of access, but this has not yet borne fruit.

The ICV national standards have been adopted by the Force – which has helped clarify the Force’s and our roles and responsibilities. I am now an established part of the Force’s induction training for new custody staff– which has helped strengthen the Force’s understanding of the crucial role we play.

This year, we achieved over 90% of the scheduled visits to the Bishopsgate custody suite and have continued to ensure that our visits correspond with the peak periods. The ICV Panel has been monitoring the times of all visits made alongside the level of usage within the Custody Suites. We effectively spread our visits over the whole week (7 days a week). However, increasing the number of visits between midnight and 6am remains a challenge although we intend to make further “in roads” in delivering on this target in 2016-17.

We have been kept up to date about the police accommodation review and the proposed plans for a new custody facility. I am a member of the Custody User Group and I will be active in ensuring that the visitors’ views are heard and that we help shape the new custody facilities at Wood Street, so that they are fit for purpose for the 21st century.

Many thanks to my fellow custody volunteers for their hard work this year, a heartfelt welcome to all of our new recruits and I would also like to thank the City of London police officers for enabling us to successfully carry out our responsibilities in 2015-2016.

Peter Tihanyi
Chairman
ICV Panel

Welcome to the 2015-16 annual report of the City of London Independent Custody Visiting Scheme.

The Court of Common Council, as the police authority for the Square Mile, has a responsibility for securing an efficient and effective police service in the City of London and holding the Commissioner of the City of London Police to account. Under paragraph 51 of the Police Reform Act 2002, the City of London is required to have in place an Independent Visitors Scheme.

Independent custody visiting schemes have been around since the 1980s following the Lord Scarman Report and became mandatory in 2003. The Scarman Report recommended a system of independent unannounced inspection of detention arrangements in police stations by local community members. Custody Visiting Panels remain a vital important means

of securing police accountability for the local communities they serve.

City Visitors are volunteers who give up their free time to provide independent scrutiny of the treatment of those held in police detention and the conditions in which they are held. They play a vital role in bringing together police and communities closer together and enhancing public perception of police procedures and practice in relation to custody.

We would like to thank all the City's Visitors for their commitment to the Scheme. The Police Committee fully appreciates their hard work and dedication to the Scheme and the contribution this makes to the overall confidence the community has in the City of London Police.

Henry Pollard
Chairman
Police Committee

Deputy Richard Regan
ICV Panel Member
Police Committee

Introduction

THE CITY OF LONDON INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING SCHEME (ICV SCHEME)

The purpose of this report is to give an account of the work of the City of London ICV Scheme in the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016. It aims to:

- report on the Panel's performance;
- provide the local community and the Police Committee with information about the visits made and what they have revealed about the treatment of detainees;
- set out issues and concerns that the visits have raised; and
- set out the objectives for 2016/17.

The City of London Corporation, in its role as the police authority for the City of London, has a statutory duty to have in place an independent custody visiting scheme. The operation of the Scheme is the responsibility of the Police Committee.

Independent custody visiting is governed by a range of legislation and guidance including the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984 and Home Office Codes of Practice and National Standards.

Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) are members of the local residential and business community who volunteer to visit police stations unannounced to check on the treatment and welfare of people held in police custody. They must:

- be over 18;
- be independent from the police force and the police authority; and
- have no direct involvement in the criminal justice system.

The City of London ICV Panel currently consists of 16 visitors who visit the custody suites at Bishopsgate Police station once a week. Programmed visits to Snow Hill custody suite (an overflow facility for Bishopsgate) were stopped in late 2013. A member of the Police Committee attends the quarterly Panel meetings and representatives of the Force attend for part of the Panel meetings so that any queries or problems that have arisen out of custody visits can be addressed. The meetings are supported by staff from the Town Clerk's Department.

THE ROLE OF INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITORS

Visits are always made in pairs, and are unannounced. The objective of all visitors is to monitor and report on the treatment and conditions of individual detainees and to check that their rights and entitlements have been upheld.

During their visit, ICVs are escorted by a custody officer or gaoler at all times. Every detainee being held is offered the opportunity to speak with the custody visitors, but may choose not to. Visit interviews are carried out within sight, but out of hearing, of the escorting officer. Strict rules of confidentiality apply so that detainees are identified by their custody numbers only, and the details of what visitors see and hear are treated as confidential. ICVs are not concerned with any alleged offence and maintain their independence and impartiality at all times. They do not provide advice to detainees; they are there to look, listen and report on conditions in custody at the time of their visit.

After every visit, custody visitors fill out a report form recording details of the visit. The

information about the visit in the form includes details of problems that were resolved immediately and those that required further action. Copies of the reports are provided for the Commander of Operations, the appropriate Chief Superintendent, and the Scheme Administrator on behalf of the Police Committee. The ICV Panel will follow up and discuss at the next review meeting any concerns that cannot be resolved during visits. If necessary, more serious issues can be highlighted directly to the Police Committee.

PANEL MEETINGS

The quarterly Panel meetings allow Visitors to discuss each visit and any issues that have arisen. In addition, short update or information sessions are often included on each agenda so that Visitors are kept up to date with any national developments concerning the custody environment. Topics discussed this year included:

Custody visit throughputs – The Panel has been successful in ensuring that their spread of visits are more appropriate to the usage levels in the custody suites at particular times. They have monitored the times of all visits made alongside the level of usage of the Custody Suites. The analysis shows that the timing of visits reflects the level of Custody Usage.

As agreed in 2014, the Panel agreed to undertake a couple of visits during the Midnight to 6am slot to ensure 24 hour coverage. There were unfortunately no visits undertaken during this slot in 2015-16. The Panel aims to undertake at least four visits annually - during the Midnight to 6 am slot in 2016-17.

Access Rights to the Custody Suite - entrance to the Suite has been a long standing issue for the ICV Visitors, who would prefer direct access to allow for more efficient unannounced visits.

Therefore the following was adopted as the agreed standard at the ICV panel meeting in November 2013 and was subsequently agreed by the Force. These arrangements were as follows:

The visitors will on arrival at the front desk be let into the station and be allowed to proceed to the area outside the custody suite. This would be without delay, unless unavoidable, due to the front office staff being temporarily unavailable. Front office staff will then contact the Custody Sergeant and let them know that the ICV is on their way to the suite and once the Custody Sergeant has judged it is safe for them to enter, they will be allowed access.

However, the recent introduction of more robust access arrangements (in response to the increased security threat) has resulted in some inconsistencies regarding their rights of access (causing a level of inconvenience, wasted journeys and frustration).

All ICV's have recently been vetted and will be receiving new passes so the Force now needs to agree a consistent process for access.

National ICV Standards - The Force adopted the new national ICV standards produced by the ICVA in early 2015. These standards clearly set out the roles & responsibilities of the ICV, their practices and the appropriate working arrangements with the Force. This standardises arrangements and is improving the custody officers understanding of the role of the ICV.

Snow Hill Police Station Custody Suite – Representations were made by Vivienne Littlechild (the Police Committee ICV SIA representative) to the Police Committee in 2013 to remove the 2010 Police Committee target of visiting Snow Hill at least four times a year. This change was made because the custody suite was used so infrequently resulting in a large number of unproductive

visits. It was agreed not to include Snow Hill visits in future rotas from early 2014 onwards. There were no programmed visits made to the custody suite in 2015-2016.

Self-Introduction – The Panel are looking at the pros and cons of a system of self-introduction. Nationally, the results of many schemes show a greater increase in the number of detainees taking up the offer of an interview - where there is self-introduction. The Panel may therefore run a pilot scheme in 2016-17 to see if it does improve the interview acceptance rates.

Healthcare Provision in the Custody Suite – the Panel continued to take a great interest in the way healthcare was provided. Visitors are satisfied with the current health care provision provided to the detainees. The Panel will continue to monitor the provision of healthcare.

Disabled Facilities – The Panel have raised the extent of disabled facilities within the Custody Suite and were generally satisfied to know that a range of provisions for disability had been put in place, although they feel that the facilities were limited and certainly not extensive.

Coverage for Major Events – The Panel agreed to increase the number of custody visits undertaken during the Olympic and Paralympic Games. From 2012-13, the ICV Panel agreed to introduce the system for increasing coverage for other future events when it was appropriate. There was no need to increase the number of custody visits to cover for major events in 2015-16.

The Panel however felt there should be closer communication with the Force during these major events – as it tends to be a more pressurised & stressful environment in custody. Panel Members need to be clear about the

Force's expectations of them during these busier times, but they also need to ensure that their independence is not compromised.

In addition to the points above the Panel have raised a number of other issues with the Custody Manager

- 1) **Repairs & Maintenance – Time lag** - The Panel raised a number of concerns about the time taken to institute repairs to the cells. This has been a persistent concern for the last few years. The Force has always responded rapidly to the concerns raised by our visitors – quickly rectifying problems. However, the Force has not replaced the current CCTV contract to improve the service provided. This was supposed to have been replaced in 2015.

Outcome – The Force will continually review the arrangements to try to maintain the improvement in response times and will investigate the significant delays in replacing the CCTV contract.

- 2) **Future Custody Suite arrangements** – The Panel has discussed the implications of the Police Accommodation Review on the future Custody arrangements. They have offered to provide input into the shaping of the new custody service.

Outcome – The Chairman of the ICV Panel is a member of the Custody User Group (a body comprised of representatives from various interested parties including the Police Federation, substance misuse professionals, custody sergeants, health and safety, etc.). The Chairman will ensure that the visitors' views are heard and that they will help shape the new custody facilities at Wood Street - so that they are fit for purpose for the 21st century.

Visit Statistics

During 2015/16 a total of 48 visits were undertaken. The following tables look at the nature of these visits in greater detail.

NO OF VISITS

Station	Target No of Visits	Achieved	% of Target
Bishopsgate	52	48	92

DAYS OF VISITS

	No of Visits	%
Monday	9	19
Tuesday	8	17
Wednesday	10	21
Thursday	10	21
Friday	3	6
Saturday	6	13
Sunday	2	4
Total	48	100

TIME OF VISITS

	Bishopsgate
00.01 – 06.00	0
06.00 - 12.00	27
12.01 – 18.00	16
18.01 – 00.00	5

DAYS OF VISITS / TIMES – COMBINED

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
00.01 – 06.00							
06.00 -12.00	3	6	3	7	2	5	1
12.01 – 18.00	5	2	5	1	1	1	1
18.01 – 00.00	1		2	2			

NO OF DETAINEES VISITED

	Total number of detainees in Suite at time of visit	No of detainees offered visit	No. of detainees accepted visit
Bishopsgate Q1	25	18	15
Bishopsgate Q2	38	31	21
Bishopsgate Q3	30	21	19
Bishopsgate Q4	20	9	5
Total	113	79	60

ISSUES AND CONCERNS ARISING FROM VISITS

This list of issues and concerns reflects the range of issues that have been raised by detainees in the City of London in the last year and, in addition, other issues which have been reported by ICV Panels elsewhere for which there has been a nil return in the City of London.

	Bishopsgate
No of Total Visits	48
Report Form with no matters requiring a police response	47
Comments individual officers - Positive	2
Comments individual officers – negative	2
Infrastructure / furnishings / fittings/out of service	35
Cleaning, tidiness and general hygiene - positive	0
Cleaning, tidiness and general hygiene - negative	1
FME Service and FME room	0
Perceived risk to detainees?	0
Procedures not followed	0
Rights and entitlements seemingly delayed	0
Periodic checks (15, 30 minutes) not maintained	0
Personal hygiene requests– (showers, washing etc)	1
Requests for food and drink	1
Temperature and availability of blankets	1
Requests for literature	0
Requests for phonecalls	0
Other	3

2016/17

The City of London ICV Panel wants to ensure that it meets its objectives in scrutinising the custody arrangements in the City of London. It has set itself the following targets for 2016/17:

- to increase the number of visits to at least 95% of target;
- the piloting of self-introduction arrangements
- to continue to promote and raise awareness of the work of the ICV Panel; and

- to undertake at least four visits per year between the hours of midnight and 6 am.

Conclusion

The City of London ICV Scheme provides an independent check on the treatment of detained persons. Through the dedication of the volunteer visitors, an appropriate level of scrutiny of the Force is achieved on which the Police Committee and the community can rely.