



City of London

Independent Custody Visiting Scheme

Annual Report

May 2014

Foreword

The City of London Independent Custody Visiting scheme has successfully completed another year. The scheme has seen some personnel changes during the year. We welcomed Alex Orme as the Scheme Administrator and said good bye to Deputy Joyce Nash who had been our Panel Member from the Police Committee since the ICV Panel's inception. We welcomed Vivienne Littlechild in her place.

There have been a number of volunteers leaving the scheme this year. I would like to thank Barbara Gough, Claire Sharples and Nigel Common for their significant contribution in help ensure detainees are treated fairly and appropriately. We have been fortunate to recruit 3 new ICV members and the Panel therefore continues to operate at full strength.

The City Police Force main custody suite is located at Bishopsgate Police Station. The second custody suite at Snow Hill Police Station remains operational, but is only used as an overflow facility. Due to a number of unproductive visits to Snow Hill, the Police Committee agreed to remove the 2010 Police Committee target of visiting Snow Hill at least four times a year in 2013-14 and it was agreed not to have these visits included in the rota. However, the trigger mechanism which notifies the System Administrator when the custody suite is actually in use - will remain in place, so the ICV's can continue to visit detainees at Snow Hill, when appropriate.

This year, we achieved over 85% of the scheduled visits to the Bishopsgate custody suite and have tried to ensure that our visits corresponded with peak periods. The ICV Panel has been monitoring the times of all visits made alongside the level of usage of the Custody Suites. We have also attempted to spread our visits over the whole week (24 hours/7 days a week) and undertaking a number of visits between midnight and 6am is one of our key targets for 2014/15.

We have been kept up to date about the police accommodation review and the proposed plans for a new custody facility. We welcome the Force's offer for us to help shape these new facilities.

Many thanks to my fellow custody volunteers for their hard work this year and I would also like to thank the City of London police officers for enabling us to successfully carry out our responsibilities in 2013-2014.

Peter Tihanyi
Chairman
ICV Panel

Welcome to the 2013-14 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

Vivienne Littlechild
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 2013 to 31 March 2014. 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 the 2014/15.

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 10 visitors who visit the custody suites at Bishopsgate Police station once a week and at Snow Hill, where the custody suite is used as an overflow for Bishopsgate, at least 4 times a year. A member of the Police Committee attends the quarterly Panel meetings and, in addition, 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:

NHS Commissioning of Police Related Healthcare – The Government has proposed the transfer of commissioning responsibility for Police Related Healthcare from the Home Office to the NHS from 2015 onwards. The NHS National Commissioning Board (NCB) will become responsible for healthcare provision in Police Custody Centres.

The NHS Commissioners will work in partnership with local Forces to ensure the requirements of the Police, NHS and, most importantly, service users are met. They will also ensure that robust Healthcare Pathways are in place to tackle the underlying physical and mental health issues that can contribute to individuals offending patterns. A key objective of these changes is to reduce levels of re-offending through better and improved engagement with health services (primarily drugs, alcohol and mental health).

This year, the Panel has kept a close watching brief with regard to these developments. They want to ensure that there is no deterioration in the quality of the service delivered and that the service becomes more targeted to meet the needs of the detainees. Visitors are satisfied with the current health care provision provided to the detainees.

Training – the Panel is keen to ensure that it receives training and keeps up-to-date with custody issues and has undertaken a variety of training and learning exercises over the year, including learning about the changes to the provision of health care for police custody centres and an explanation of the use of restraint by Police Officers. Further training sessions are being arranged for this year.

Custody visit throughputs – The Panel has tried to ensure that the spread of visits are appropriate to the volume of usage 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 last year, the Panel began undertaking visits during the Midnight to 6am slot to ensure 24 hour coverage. One visit was undertaken during this slot in 2013-14. The Panel will continue to undertake two to three visits annually - during the Midnight to 6 am slot.

Access Rights to the Custody Suite – Entrance to the Suite continued to be an issue for the IC Visitors. Visitors would prefer to make unannounced visits. Visitors' previously had to wait at the front desk at Bishopsgate Police Station, until the desk clerk phones the Custody Suite. From there, they are either escorted or go alone to the custody suite. They then have to wait until access is given to them by the custody officers. This issue was raised by the

custody visitors during their interviews for the HMIC/HMIP inspection of custody facilities.

The Force at the September 2013 Police Committee suggested an alternative proposal for the future access rights for our IC Visitors. The new arrangements were that 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. The proposed new arrangements were well-received by Members and the IC Visitors and was adopted as the agreed standard at the ICV panel meeting in November 2013.

Snow Hill Police Station Custody Suite – Since 2009 the Snow Hill custody suite has only been used for ‘bail back’ and occasionally as an overspill facility for Bishopsgate, resulting in a large number of unproductive visits. As a result it was agreed by the Police Committee at its meeting in May 2010 that a mechanism be introduced to trigger visits in place of scheduled visits. The aim of using the trigger was to match visits to when the custody suite was actually in use. The trigger mechanism however has not worked effectively - between 2011-13, the visitors were only able to visit twice and in each of these cases there were empty cells.

Representations were made by Vivienne Littlechild (the Police Committee ICV SIA representative) to the October 2013 Police Committee to remove the 2010 Police Committee target of visiting Snow Hill at least four times a year in 2013-14 and it was agreed not to include Snow Hill visits in future rotas. However, the trigger mechanism remains in place.

Coverage for Major Events – The Panel agreed to increase the number of custody visits undertaken during the Olympic and Paralympic Games. A trigger mechanism, similar to that already in place at Snow Hill, was agreed where the Force notified the Corporation if any marked increase in custody requirements did occur. 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 2013-14.

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

1) **Time lag for Repairs & Maintenance** - The Panel raised a number of concerns about the time taken to institute repairs to the phone service, CCTV and to the cells. These concerns were also raised in the Annual Report for 2012-13. The Force has responded rapidly to many of the concerns raised by our visitors – quickly rectifying problems with the heating and air-conditioning systems, the CCTV system, the detainee’s consultation telephone and the Medical Examiners chair. The Force is embarking on a review of the current CCTV contract to improve the service provided.

Outcome – The Force will continually review the arrangements to try to maintain the improvement in response times.

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 Force plan to draw on the Panel’s knowledge and experience to help shape the design of the new custody suites.

Visit Statistics

During 2013/14 a total of 45 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	45	86
Snow Hill	0	0	0
Total	52	45	86

DAYS OF VISITS

	No of Visits	%
Monday	7	16
Tuesday	8	18
Wednesday	5	11
Thursday	7	16
Friday	9	20
Saturday	7	16
Sunday	2	4
Total	45	

TIME OF VISITS

	Bishopsgate	Snow Hill
00.01 – 06.00	1	0
06.00 - 12.00	29	0
12.01 – 18.00	7	0
18.01 – 00.00	8	0

DAYS OF VISITS / TIMES – COMBINED

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
00.01 – 06.00	1						
06.00 -12.00	4	5	2	3	7	7	1
12.01 – 18.00	2			3	2		
18.01 – 00.00		3	3	1			1

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	42	34	29
Bishopsgate Q2	41	33	30
Bishopsgate Q3	18	10	6
Bishopsgate Q4	48	19	18
Snow Hill Q1	0	0	0
Snow Hill Q2	0	0	0
Snow Hill Q3	0	0	0
Snow Hill Q4	0	0	0
Total	149	96	83

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	Snow Hill
No of Total Visits	45	0
Report Form with no matters requiring a police response	25	0
Comments individual officers - Positive	0	0
Comments individual officers – negative	0	0
Infrastructure / furnishings / fittings/out of service	16	0
Cleaning, tidiness and general hygiene - positive	17	0
Cleaning, tidiness and general hygiene - negative	0	0
FME Service and FME room	2	0
Perceived risk to detainees?	0	0
Procedures not followed	0	0
Rights and entitlements seemingly delayed	1	0
Periodic checks (15, 30 minutes) not maintained	0	0
Personal hygiene requests– (showers, washing etc)	0	0
Requests for food and drink	0	0
Temperature and availability of blankets	2	0
Requests for literature	0	0
Requests for phonecalls	0	0
Other	1	0

2014/15

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 2014/15:

- to increase the number of visits to at least 95% of target;
- to continue to promote and raise awareness of the work of the ICV Panel;
- to continue with refresher training
- to continue to undertake two or three visits per year between the hours of midnight and 6 am.

- to ensure that the ICV membership is representative of the communities it serves

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.