



City of London

Independent Custody Visiting Scheme

Annual Report

May 2017

Foreword

The City of London Independent Custody Visiting scheme has had a very successful year with several changes to the personnel of the panel. After the recruitment campaign last year, appointing eight new ICV members to our scheme; these members have now undertaken training and shadowed our more experienced visitors. They have provided a fresh and innovative approach both in terms of their contribution in Panel meetings and during their visits to the custody suite.

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 or interest from newer visitors.

The relationship with the custody staff has gone from strength to strength this year with comments from all visitors on the friendliness of the staff when conducting their visits. There have been occasional instances of ICVs being made to wait at reception for long periods, but these have been well explained by the Police at recent panel meetings.

Some members are still undergoing re-vetting and whilst 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 use of cards to access Bishopsgate custody suite and the details on the passes.

The ICV national standards have been adopted by the Force – which has helped clarify the Force's and our roles and responsibilities. This has also coincided with the refreshed ICV Guidelines that were approved by Police Committee in January 2017. These were in need of modernisation due to some legislative changes internally and externally. I also continue to be 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 95% 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). We also now have several volunteers for the next quarter to visit between midnight and 6am.

We have been kept up to date about the police accommodation review and the proposed plans for a new custody facility. However, I have not been invited to recent Custody User Group meetings; I still hope to 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 to meet modern expectations.

I give my thanks to my fellow custody volunteers for their hard work this year, and especially to our new visitors who have fitted in seamlessly. I would also like to thank the City of London police officers for enabling us to successfully carry out our responsibilities in 2016-2017.

Finally, I would particularly like to thank some of our visitors who have left this year: Max Jack, who was our first Chairman of the Panel and supported the formation of the scheme and Pierre Dagonnot who panel members will remember for his Gallic charm.

I would also like to welcome Craig Spencer as our new scheme manager and to thank Alex Orme for his immense contribution to the scheme in the three years he had as manager.

Peter Tihanyi
Chairman
ICV Panel

Welcome to the 2016-17 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 continue to 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 appreciates their hard work and firm commitment to the Scheme and the contribution this makes to the overall confidence the community has in the City of London Police.

Deputy Doug Barrow
Chairman
Police Committee

Nicholas Bensted-Smith
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 2016 to 31 March 2017. 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 12 (this is the maximum number required)

visitors who visit the custody suites at Bishopsgate Police station three times every three weeks. 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 (ICV Scheme Manager and Coordinator).

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 having a spread of visits across the week which is 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.

The Panel has several volunteers for the next quarter to undertake visits during the Midnight to 6am slot to ensure 24 hour coverage. There were unfortunately no visits undertaken during this slot in 2016-17. The Panel aims to undertake at least four visits annually - during the Midnight to 6 am slot in 2017-18.

The Panel now undertakes three visits every fortnight which is an increase to the weekly visits. This has not resulted in a decrease in the percentage of visits overall. The panel also met the target of undertaking 95% of their visits which was included in the previous report.

Access Rights to the Custody Suite - entrance to the Suite has been a long standing issue for the ICV Visitors, who would prefer swift access to allow for more efficient unannounced visits. There is now an agreed entrance procedure between custody staff and ICVs:

Upon arriving at the public enquiry counter, independent custody visitors must identify themselves and explain the purpose of their visit. At this point, they must be admitted immediately to the custody area. Independent custody visitors must accept that they may have to wait their turn to receive attention by the counter clerk. The current process means they may not interrupt a person who is in conversation with the counter clerk, but will be the next to be attended to in this situation.

All ICV's have now been vetted and have received new passes. There still needs to be a consistent format for these cards and their access. The Force need to ensure that ICV cards are not time barred and will not be declared inactive if not used within a month.

The Standing Operating Procedure produced for the Police on ICVs also now reflects the updated ICV Guidelines that were approved by Police Committee earlier this year.

Self-Introduction to Detainees – The Panel considered a paper encouraging the policy of self-introduction when interviewing detainees. This has been seen to increase the rate of acceptance when interviewing detainees. The Panel agreed to introduce this as standard policy for members, unless any panel member did not feel comfortable doing this. This has also been communicated to the officers and is reflected in their SOP.

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. A new contract for custody healthcare has now been signed from April 2017. This will be reported fully to Committee in May 2017. There is an agreed negotiation that healthcare providers will now be on site 24/7 rather than on call at certain times of day.

Additionally, the previous contract was also amended to reflect the long waiting times for approved mental health professionals. The contract included specific sanctions for the contractor for poor response times for mental health patients, something that was not previously included.

Annual Update on Custody – the first annual update to Police Committee was received in September and included the current procedures and statistics for young persons and children as well as those with mental health problems in custody. The panel were able to give their opinion on the style and structure of the paper to ensure that Police Committee received the correct information. This report will now come to the panel and Police Committee annually to assess trends of those that enter custody.

The format was also approved by Police Committee and this give the basis for future reports. The report confirmed the current procedures in the Bishopsgate custody suite for young persons and those experiencing mental health crises. The report was also able to clarify any recent policy developments, including the recent introduction of the Children's and Mental Health Crisis Care Concordat.

It will also provide information on the destinations and referrals pathways for detainees. This is important that ongoing support is given to children and young persons and those with mental health difficulties. This also provides information of the length of time young people are in custody as well as how

long some medical support has taken to get to detainees.

Protocol on Youth Custody – As part of the report, the Scheme Manager also recommended the creation of a protocol for young people in custody. Working in partnership with the Community and Children's Services Department, the purpose of this protocol is to reduce the time that children spend in police custody, by making pathways clear to suitable alternative accommodation where needed.

Reducing the time that children are in police custody requires clear communication and referral pathways and this protocol will provide guidance for all officers.

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.

Outcome – The ICV Scheme Manager met with the City Surveyor department to go through the issues with different custody cells. Regular issues will be shared with the department in future to ensure the problems within cells do not keep them out of action for too long.

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. 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. The Chairman is awaiting future dates for this meeting to be sent.

Visit Statistics

During 2017/18 a total of 64 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	64	64	100

DAYS OF VISITS

	No of Visits	%
Monday	7	11
Tuesday	12	19
Wednesday	9	14
Thursday	14	22
Friday	9	14
Saturday	7	11
Sunday	6	9
Total	64	100

TIME OF VISITS

00.01 – 06.00	0
06.00 - 12.00	42
12.01 – 18.00	16
18.01 – 00.00	5

*1 visit did not have the time recorded.

DAYS OF VISITS / TIMES – COMBINED

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
00.01 – 06.00							
06.00 -12.00	4	8	5	6	8	6	5
12.01 – 18.00	2	3	4	7			
18.01 – 00.00	1	1		1	1		1

*1 visit did not have the time recorded.

NO OF DETAINEES VISITED

	Total number of detainees in Custody at time of visit	No of detainees offered visit	No. of detainees accepted visit
Bishopsgate Q1	27	18	15
Bishopsgate Q2	21	14	11
Bishopsgate Q3	58	38	36
Bishopsgate Q4	58	38	33
Total	164	108	85

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	64
Report Form with no matters requiring a police response	49
Infrastructure / furnishings / fittings/out of service	46
Comments individual officers - Positive	20
Comments individual officers – negative	1
Cleaning, tidiness and general hygiene - positive	10
Cleaning, tidiness and general hygiene - negative	4
Information Technology	5
Temperature and availability of blankets	4
FME Service and FME room	2
Procedures not followed	1
Rights and entitlements seemingly delayed	1
Personal hygiene requests– (showers, washing etc)	1
Requests for phonecalls	1
Perceived risk to detainees	0
Periodic checks (15, 30 minutes) not maintained	0
Requests for food and drink	0
Requests for literature	0
Other	0

2017/18

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 2017/18:

- to continue to promote and raise awareness of the work of the ICV Panel;
- to undertake at least four visits per year between the hours of midnight and 6 am.

- to maintain the consistently high level of visits
- include a visit to the overflow facility at Snow Hill.

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.