

# Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Annual Report 2016/17



*Making Suffolk a safer place to live, work, travel and invest*

# Suffolk Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Annual Report

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## **Introduction by Tim Passmore, Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk**

This report provides an overview of the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme in Suffolk and includes details of what the volunteers on our two panels have been doing between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017.

Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) are volunteers from our local community who visit the two Police Investigation Centres (PICs) in the county, unannounced and in pairs, to check on the welfare of detained persons and the conditions in which they are held. They help me to fulfil my responsibility to ensure that policing in Suffolk is carried out fairly, in accordance with relevant legislation and Home Office guidance, and with respect for the human rights of all those coming into contact with the police.

Detainees in Suffolk are held at either the PIC situated in Bury St Edmunds or the PIC at Martlesham Heath. There is a Panel of visitors allocated to each one to ensure visits are made on a weekly basis. Those detained in the Waveney area are taken to the PIC at Gorleston as part of the joint provision of custody services with Norfolk.

I should like to place on record my thanks to the ICVs in Suffolk for their dedication and commitment in undertaking this important role.

I hope that you find this report interesting and informative. I am pleased that ICVs continue to give reassurance that, in Suffolk, the treatment of detained persons is fair and in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (referred to as PACE) and the Safer Detention Guidelines.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Passmore". The signature is written in a cursive style.

## **Comment from Gareth Wilson, Chief Constable**

One of the most significant actions my officers can take is to deprive someone of their liberty. Their treatment within one of our Custody Centres is, quite rightly, subject of scrutiny by the ICVs. Suffolk Constabulary prides itself on how we interact with our communities and to have transparency surrounding such a sensitive part of our business is welcomed to ensure we are fully aware of our levels of service and to identify how we can continue to improve.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gareth Wilson". The signature is written in a cursive style.

## Organisation of the Scheme in Suffolk

As at 31 March 2017, there were 16 ICVs participating in the Scheme across the county, 6 on the Bury St Edmunds Panel and 10 on the Ipswich Panel. Each Panel nominates a 'Co-ordinator', who is responsible for creating a rota of visits which ensure that only the ICVs know what day and time they will arrive to speak to detainees, and provides the Scheme with greater credibility and independence.

The Custody Visiting Scheme seeks to be representative of our communities, including taking account of different ethnic origins, gender and age ranges. When we appoint new members to the Scheme, consideration is given to enhancing this representation.

The following table provides a statistical summary of the custody visitors by gender, age and ethnicity.

<b>Suffolk ICVs Data</b>		<b>Bury St Edmunds</b>	<b>Ipswich</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>Female</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Age</b>	<b>18-29</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>30-39</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>40-49</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>50-59</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>60-69</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>70+</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>White British</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>White Other</b>	<b>1</b>

## Details of visits

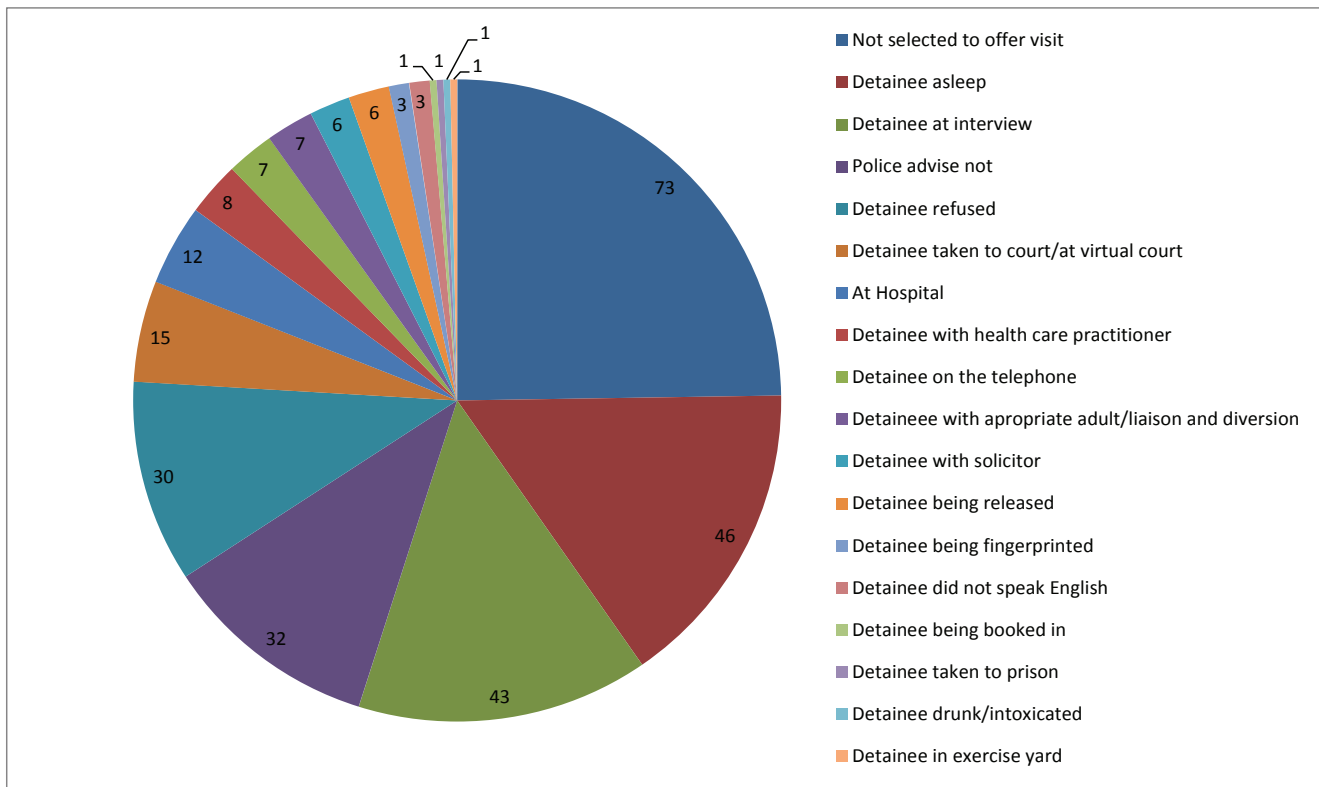
Between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017, a total of 98 visits were made. 592 persons were detained in custody at the time visits were conducted and 297 of these were visited (the overall throughput for the PICs located in Suffolk for the year was 16,186). Whilst offered a visit, there is no obligation for a detained person to speak with ICVs.

More detail in respect of visits to the the Bury St Edmunds and Ipswich Centres is provided in the table below:

<b>Police Investigation Centre visited</b>	<b>No. of Visits</b>	<b>No. of detainees held</b>	<b>No. of detainees available to visit</b>	<b>No. of detainees visited</b>	<b>% of detainees visited (of those available)</b>	<b>No. of detainees not visited*</b>
<b>Bury St Edmunds</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>Ipswich</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>167</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>592</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>295</b>

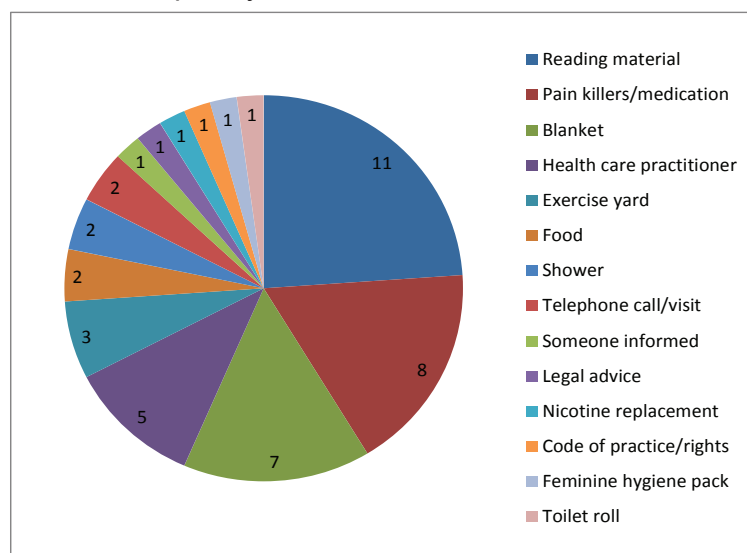
\*Note: There are a number of reasons why detained persons are not visited, for example, the police may advise against it for health and safety reasons. The category 'not visited' is broken down in the following pie chart showing the reasons detained persons were not visited during the period. 25% of the detainees not seen were 'not selected by ICVs' themselves as they have focused their time in custody on more in-depth interviews with fewer detainees and scrutiny of their custody records, rather than brief interviews with all detainees held at the time of the visit.

## Breakdown of reasons detainees not visited - Total 295 not seen



## Issues reported from custody visits

As reported last year, an ongoing issue relates to the operation of the Athena IT system and the impact on processes and staff. ICVs have received regular updates at their quarterly Panel meetings about progress with developing the system and procedures in place for continuity when there have been problems. The PCCs for Suffolk and Norfolk are also receiving regular updates on this issue. Visitors have also commented on detainees being held for some time in police custody, having been through the virtual court process, and awaiting collection for transport to prison. This was raised with the Head of Custody and the PCCs for Norfolk and Suffolk and assurance was given that a review of custody was being undertaken which would include consideration of the impact of the virtual court on custody staff and detainees. This issue was also raised with the Independent Custody Visiting Association and subsequently raised by them with the Home Office. During the past year visitors have also noted concerns regarding the welfare of detainees which have been subsequently addressed by the Force. However, in the main, ICVs have noted that detainees have been cared for appropriately and there were a number of occasions when detainees specifically commented that they were satisfied with their treatment whilst in police custody. As a result of their conversations with detainees the following requests were raised with custody staff and subsequently dealt with:



## Activities during 2016/17

The ICVs Panels met on a quarterly basis with the relevant Custody Inspector to discuss visiting data and any issues arising. This is particularly useful to raise queries and get updates on new developments.

A joint Norfolk and Suffolk custody visitors' training day took place in Thetford on Saturday 4 February 2017 and was well attended by visitors. This training included a refresher on the role of ICVs, categories of detainees and custody records as well as a session on The Transfer of Children from Police Custody – The Concordat and a session on Safeguarding Adults.

Four volunteers and the Scheme Administrator attended the ICVA Regional Conference hosted by Hertfordshire on 4 March 2017. The programme included a presentation on the Choices and Consequences (C2) Programme, appropriate adults and custody collaboration. There was also an input on Building Better Opportunities from an ex offender.

Two volunteers, one from each panel, attended the ICVA National Conference in Birmingham on 11 March 2017. Presentations included an update from ICVA, a presentation from the Chief Executive of the National Appropriate Adult Network, an ex-offender working with the St Giles Trust and representatives from Liaison and Diversion in West Midlands.

The photos below were taken at Awards Ceremonies in July 2016 and April 2017 at which long serving visitors received certificates and thanks for their service from the Commissioner and Chief Constable.



A further joint training and information day took place on 24 May 2017 in Suffolk which included presentations on Liaison and Diversion, Detainee Healthcare, Appropriate Adults and Personal Safety Training (photos from the training event below).





## Looking ahead

As recruitment is an ongoing process continuous training will be essential and we look forward to receiving the new training materials from the Independent Custody Visiting Association this year.

We will continue to work closely with the Norfolk Scheme as we have a joint custody function and also work closely with our regional counterparts to share best practice and plans.

The Commissioner will accompany ICVs on a visit this year so that he can see the process in action for himself.

## Conclusion

Custody Visiting continues to be essential in providing independent scrutiny of the treatment of detained persons and the conditions in which they are held. As well as the mutual level of assurance it offers, the Scheme helps to build partnerships between the police and the communities they serve, and raise public confidence generally.

If you are interested in becoming an Independent Custody Visitors or would like more information please contact:

The Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Administrator  
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Ipswich IP5 3QS  
Telephone: (01473) 782773  
E-mail: [spcc@suffolk.pnn.police.uk](mailto:spcc@suffolk.pnn.police.uk)

For more information on the role of ICVs and that of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk visit [www.suffolk-pcc.gov.uk](http://www.suffolk-pcc.gov.uk)

For more information regarding the role of the Independent Custody Visiting Association visit [www.icva.org.uk](http://www.icva.org.uk)

If you require the information in the Annual Report in any other format, please contact us.

