



Custody Contact

Edition 3: January 2009

Welcome to New Visitors!



Welcome to the first edition of Custody Contact for 2009! Following an extensive recruitment campaign, we are delighted to welcome 22 new volunteers to the Avon and Somerset Custody Visiting Scheme.

Bath Panel – Laura Clements and Emma Yates

Broadbury Road Panel – Malcolm Clare and Aimee Stevens

Staple Hill Panel – Laura Clark, Robert Golding, Helen Thomas and Sheena Witter

Trinity Road Panel – Sadé Currie, Rosie Domingue, Julie Fuller, Hannah Loveridge, Michael Taylor and Roisin Wilby

Taunton Panel – Kerry Collard, Helen Perrott and Digby Reed

Yeovil Panel – Wendy Churchill and Ann Julian

Weston-s-Mare Panel – Rachel Fletcher and John Payne (also on Bath Panel)

Panel Coordinators have been taking our new volunteers through local induction across the area, and 14 new visitors attended an Initial Training session at Police Headquarters, Portishead on Saturday 10 January. Kirsten Stephen, Police Authority Lead Member for Custody Visiting opened the event and welcomed the new visitors to the scheme. Thank you to Anna Jarratt (Independent Custody Visiting Association), Sergeant Kevin Kearley (Avon and Somerset Constabulary), and Alan Cadogan (Weston Super Mare Panel Coordinator) for their lively contribution to the day!

A second Initial Training session will be held on **Saturday 18 April**. Arrangements for Cultural Awareness and Diversity Training are also underway.

We are continuing to actively recruit in Bath and Yeovil – please spread the word among family, friends, and acquaintances!



Thank you and farewell...

To Reg James, Panel Coordinator for Yeovil who retired from the Custody Visiting Scheme at the end of December 2008 following 8 years service on the Scheme. Reg first became a Custody Visitor back in 2001, and has long supported the Yeovil Panel. Reg's experience, knowledge and commitment will be sorely missed, but we've high hopes that his successor Gordon Czapiewski will be able to continue his good work.

We are delighted to welcome Geoffrey Mackett to the Bath Panel to take up the reigns of Coordinator, after Jane Lock stepped down in December. Geoffrey has kindly offered to continue serving with Bridgwater. Our thanks to Jane for her support in Bath.

It's also a fond farewell and good luck to Damian Warburton from Staple Hill Panel and Joanna Green from Trinity Road Panel.

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Six custody visitors represented Avon and Somerset at the annual Independent Custody Visiting Association Conference, held this year in Stratford-upon-Avon. Some 250 delegates attended from as far afield as Fife and Northern Ireland. Speakers covered a range of topics of interest to Custody Visitors:

Improving Custody, Raising Community Engagement – Neil Curtis (Home Office)

With the government review of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act in its final stages of consultation, Neil Curtis and Ami Badmus spoke about how the review is seeking to improve custodial care. Initiatives coming forward include working with stakeholders including Mencap to ensure that notices of rights and entitlements are appropriate and understood by people with learning difficulties; strengthening links with the NHS to improve access to healthcare; and steps to minimise the amount of time that detainees are held in custody.

The review has shown the extent to which PACE is regarded as an exemplar approach, and recognises the value of community scrutiny, such as custody visiting, as an essential safeguard. The review is looking at how to bring together national bodies such as ICVA to share good practice and lessons learnt across the custodial estate, and strengthen national support for custody visiting and other similar roles.

Inspection of Police Custody Facilities – Nigel Newcomen (HM Inspectorate of Prisons)

HM Inspectorate of Prisons and HM Inspectorate of Constabulary have started joint inspections of all police custody facilities. The inspection programme has been developed to meet UK obligations under the United Nations Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Pilots have been held, and from April 2009, a series of

unannounced inspections will take place across the country. Inspections will be carried out in multi-disciplinary teams, focusing on strategy, treatment and conditions, healthcare, and individual rights. Inspectors looked at custody visiting reports, examined whether issues raised had been addressed, and held interviews with custody visitors as part of the inspection, again demonstrating the important role of the scheme.

Emerging themes include:

- Gap between management expectation and reality
- Impressive adherence to PACE
- Quality and performance of dedicated custody staff
- Tendency towards risk aversion (e.g. removing toilet paper from cells)
- Healthcare is variable across Force areas
- More attention should be given to the needs of vulnerable groups including women, juveniles and immigration detainees

Initial meetings have been held with the Force Custody Manager to look at how Custody Visitors can contribute to preparations for the inspection. Further information will be included in the next newsletter.

Supporting Independent Monitoring Boards – Angela Clay (Association of Members of Independent Monitoring Boards)

The Independent Monitoring Board is prisons equivalent of the custody visiting scheme. Their remit is to monitor fairness and respect for people held in the

142 prisons and 10 immigration removal centres across the country. The scheme differs to custody visiting in that IMB visits are carried out alone, and unescorted. Arrangements for recruitment, training, lobbying and national support mechanisms (including an online discussion forum, helpline and daily news service) for the IMB scheme offer useful parallels for the custody visiting scheme.

Association of Police Authority Perspective on Independent Custody Visiting – Bob Jones (APA Chair)

Bob Jones spoke about potential changes to ICVA, following a review of its governance arrangements. It is proposed that there will be a greater emphasis on joint working with other organisations supporting similar schemes, and a stronger role for Police Authorities in the governance of ICVA.

Healthcare & Forensic Service within Police Custody – Dr Mike Wilks (Metropolitan Police)

Dr Wilks spoke about the role of the Forensic Medical Examiner, and the challenge of delivering healthcare in the police custody setting. Challenges include the dual responsibility in the duty of care to detainee and the duty to the police service; the disproportionate level of detainees with substance misuse, literacy problems or other issues that have a bearing on the skills needed to offer appropriate care; consent and confidentiality; and the range of healthcare models operating in a police custody environment.

ICVA – Launch of New Training DVD – Ian Smith (ICVA)

Delegates were given a preview of the new ICVA training DVD. Filmed at our very own Thornbury Police Station, the DVD features scenarios that will be used as part of the new ICVA training package that is currently under development. ICVA is looking to make the new training package more accessible, based on three competency levels: introductory, intermediate, and advanced. ICVA will be asking all custody visitors for their views on the skills and knowledge that need to be covered at each stage of the new programme. We will be writing out to all custody visitors to seek your views as soon as we have further details from ICVA.

Taunton Refurbishment

Taunton Custody Unit closed on 12 January 2009 in order that contractors could commence a much anticipated refurbishment. The scheduled redecoration and refurbishment is on schedule, and the unit is due to reopen for business as usual on Friday 6 February 2009.

During the closure period, detainees from the Taunton area are being sent to Bridgwater and Minehead Custody Units. Visitors in Bridgwater have noticed an increase in the number of detainees being held in the unit, and have reported that custody staff in the unit are coping well with the slight influx.

News from Avon and Somerset

Work continues to implement recommendations of the Custody Visiting Scheme Review.

Following discussion with the Force Custody Manager at the last Panel Coordinators' meeting, guidance has now been drafted on visiting **Non-Designated Custody Units**. This covers the differences that custody visitors would expect to find at a non-designated unit, and practical arrangements for carrying out a visit. This will be circulated via Panel Meetings.

The Custody Visiting Handbook for the Avon and Somerset scheme has been revised to take account of changes arising from the review, and other recent developments. A **Volunteers Agreement** has been drawn up in consultation with the Panel Coordinators, setting out what is expected of custody visitors in carrying out their role, and what you can expect from the Police Authority to support you during your time as a volunteer. Copies of both documents will be sent to all custody visitors in the near future.

Plans for the first annual **Spring Seminar** are taking shape. Following feedback from Panel Meetings, we are continuing with the theme of supporting vulnerable people in custody, and approaching speakers on issues ranging from mental health to substance misuse. A date will be published as soon as possible – likely to be a Saturday in May.

Panel Coordinators will be meeting on Wednesday 25 February – feedback from this meeting will appear in the next newsletter.

Have we got your correct details?

Southwest One, on behalf of Avon and Somerset Police, Somerset County Council and Taunton Deane, have written to all Custody Visitors to verify that the personal details they hold about you are correct.

Southwest One are in the process of verifying that the data they hold for people on the payments system is accurate in advance of changing financial systems later this year. Please rest assured that the request is genuine, and take a couple of minutes out of your busy day to respond to the request. Please ensure that your address, contact details and email address are correct, and – wherever possible – please confirm your banking details in order that you can be paid your expenses via BACS.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the letter please do not hesitate to contact the Police Authority Office on **01275 816038**.

News roundup

Panel Coordinators Meeting

Wednesday 25 February 2009

6:00-8:00pm

Somerset Room Police Headquarters, Portishead

Initial Training for New

Custody Visitors

Saturday 18 April 2009

09:30am – 4:00pm

Avon Room, Police Headquarters, Portishead

Night Owls

On a cold dark morning back in November, our intrepid visitors Malcolm Woolaston and Carol Hulme made a call to Bridgwater Custody Unit.

The Panel were keen to ensure a late night/early morning visit after they noted that they had not performed a custody visit at an 'unsociable' hour for quite some time. Having arrived at 1am on a Sunday morning, Malcolm reported that the unit was very busy but that custody staff had everything well in hand.

Malcolm and Carol's visit served as a timely reminder that we should all be looking to vary the day and time of our visits as it helps ensure that we experience all aspects of custody – even the unsavoury, loud and smelly ones!

Well done to Malcolm and Carol for their commitment to custody visiting and for getting out of bed well before the crack of dawn on the weekend!

Custody Conundrum

- What do I do if....

(submitted by Alan Cadogan)

In each edition, we try to answer a burning question to help deal with scenarios you may encounter on a visit. This time, we're looking at legal advice:

Q: "I want to know whether a detainee has been informed of their right to legal advice. I know that I shouldn't be thought to be actually offering advice. Could it be perceived by Police that I was pressing a detainee to ask for a solicitor?"

A: The majority of detainees are held under PACE Code C. When a detainee is brought into custody, they must be informed by the custody officer of the following rights that can be exercised at any stage during their time in custody:

- The right to have someone informed of their arrest
- The right to consult privately with a solicitor and of the fact that independent legal advice is available free of charge
- The right to consult the PACE Codes of Practice

It is therefore legitimate for custody visitors to ask the detainee whether they have been informed of their right to legal advice, and to inform the Custody Sergeant if the detainee tells the custody visitors that they wish to see a solicitor. Home Office Codes of Practice remind Custody Visitors that they must remain impartial and must not seek to involve themselves in any way with the process of investigation. Custody visitors should therefore take care to ensure that in asking the detainee about their right to legal advice, their focus remains on checking whether detainees have been offered their rights and entitlements, and not enter into any discussion with the detainee in relation to their case, nor to urge the detainee to take up this right.

Get in touch with us

IF you have any enquiries please feel free to contact the Police Authority office on

01275 816377 or email

policeauthority@avonandsomerset.police.uk

Forthcoming panel meetings

Bath *Date Pending* (April 2009)

Bridgwater Tuesday 28 April 2009, 7:00pm, Bridgwater Station

Broadbury Road Monday 18 May 2009, 7:30pm, Maeksknoll Elderly Persons Home

Southmead Thursday 12 February 2009, 7:00pm, Southmead Police Station

Staple Hill Monday 23 February 2009, 7:00pm, Staple Hill Police Station

Taunton Tuesday 24 February 2009, 7:30pm, District Commander's Office, Taunton Police Station

Trinity Road *Date Pending*

Weston-s-Mare Monday 27 April 2009, 7:00pm, WSM Police Station

Yeovil Tuesday 10 February 2009, 7:00pm, Yeovil Police Station