

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE – 7 JULY 2010

INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING SCHEME

REPORT BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Introduction

1. This report updates the Committee on developments relating to the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme.

Structure

- 2.1 The Lead Member for the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme, Mr B Duncan, with the ICV Scheme Manager, Mrs D Longden co-ordinating the scheme, manages the recruitment of ICVs, training, liaison with Sussex Police and general management of independent custody visiting.
- 2.2 Within Sussex Police, the new Head of Custody is Acting Chief Inspector Peter Dommett. Each of the six Custody Centres is managed by the following Custody Inspectors: Eric Wilson (Worthing), to be replaced by Verity Lockhart in July; David Sheppard (Chichester); Jonathan Hull and Mark Powles (Brighton); Neil Grimwood-Jones and Bruce Methven (Crawley); Charles Vine (Eastbourne), and Danny O'Neill (Hastings). All Custody Inspectors report directly to Acting Chief Inspector Peter Dommett.
- 2.3 Each Custody Centre has a Policy Authority link member: currently Mr B Duncan (Brighton), Mr P Bratton (Chichester), Mr F Faiz (Crawley) Prof G Bull (Eastbourne), Mr G Daniel (Hastings) and Mr A Smith (Worthing).
- 2.4 Mr John Wales is the Independent Custody Visiting representative on this Committee.

ICV Panels

- 3.1 Meetings are held twice-yearly by each panel. Meetings are chaired by the Panel Co-ordinator and are attended by panel members, the relevant Custody Inspector, the Authority link member and the ICV Scheme Manager.
- 3.2 Panel meetings provide an opportunity to share experiences and ideas, to solve any issues with the management of the visiting rota and to raise issues with the Scheme Manager.
- 3.3 The ICV Scheme Manager arranges Panel Co-ordinator meetings twice a year at County Hall.

ICV Newsletter

- 4.1 The bi-annual Newsletter was circulated to all ICVs in April 2010. The Newsletter updates ICVs, Custody Inspectors and Professional Standards Committee members with updates regarding local and national developments. Included with the last Newsletter was the revised Code of Practice on Independent Custody Visiting from the Secretary of State for the Home Office.
- 4.2 The Newsletter can be found on the Authority's website.

ICV Regional Meeting

- 5.1 The ICV Regional Meeting took place at the APA Offices on 4 March 2010. ICV Scheme Administrators from Sussex, Thames Valley, Surrey Kent and Hampshire met to discuss the management of their individual schemes and to partake in debates about national practice.
- 5.2 The vetting levels employed by ICV Scheme Administrators were discussed. There was some variance across the different schemes. The new Code of Practice states that "any appointment is subject to vetting or security clearance for all custody visitors (to an appropriate level as determined by the Home Office, which will be at Developed Vetting (DV) level for those visiting persons detained under the Terrorism Acts".
- 5.3 The Association of Police Authorities (APA) advised that ICVA will take the lead on training, particularly Human Rights Training.
- 5.4 Further to legislation passed in November 2009, Police Authorities have enhanced responsibilities for terror suspects. It is likely that in each region a number of ICVs will need to be vetted to a higher level as they will be required to review video evidence of interviews.
- 5.5 The new ICVA training material was reviewed. Scheme Administrators reported they had found little difference between the old and new materials.

Training Events

- 6.1 ICVs have been invited to two training sessions this year. The first session was on the subject of mental health. A joint presentation was given by Sarah Gates, the Force Mental Health Liaison Officer, and Inspector Danny O'Neill, Custody Inspector at Hastings.
- 6.2 A training session was delivered on Gypsies and Travellers, exploring the lifestyles and traditions of this minority group.
- 6.3 A future training event is being considered on the subject of young people in the Criminal Justice System.

Hampshire Annual ICV Seminar

- 7.1 An invitation was extended to Sussex ICVs to attend the annual ICV Seminar in Hampshire on 20 May. Eight ICVs attended, along with the Scheme Manager.
- 7.2 A Sussex ICV event is being planned to take place in the autumn, at a venue easily accessible and situated roughly in the middle of the county. Depending on the programme and venue, it is possible that places can be extended to other regional authorities.
- 7.3 It is a requirement of ICVs to attend annual training events. This is an important aspect of the role and it is felt that not all ICVs are up-to-date on their training. Panel Co-ordinators have been asked to provide details of their ICVs who have fallen behind on training.

Self-Introduction

- 8.1 Self-introduction by ICVs was piloted in Worthing and Crawley. The method is now working well in Hastings and Crawley, with ICVs reporting a higher success rate of access to detained persons.
- 8.2 The method of self-introduction is being adopted across all panels, making it a universal procedure in Sussex.

Statistics

- 9.1 A summary of the ICV statistics for the period 1 October 2009 to 31 March 2010 is attached as an appendix to this paper.
- 9.2 The addition to the visiting report form of the PSA 24 question suggests that ICVs' needs are catered for in terms of physical, cultural and religious requirements.
- 9.3 Statistics show that fewer than 10 per cent of completed forms indicated that physical, cultural and religious requirements were not addressed and in these instances the matter was brought to the attention of custody staff.
- 9.4 The long-standing issue of the ventilation system in the Hastings Custody Centre has been added to the Force Risk Management System (RMS). The RMS provides a wide range of reports to assist the Authority in fulfilling its oversight of the Force and in the management of risk specific to the Authority. The risk associated with Hastings Custody Centre is considered to be one of the top strategic risks. The recent meeting of the Corporate Governance Committee learned that a scoping exercise for action is underway, using contractors, and with engagement from the Force Facilities Department.

Primary Custody Policy

- 10.1 The Force Primary Custody Policy has been in draft form for some time. Although not a "live" policy, the Force is working to it and using it as a reference point.

- 10.2 The Police and Criminal Evidence Act and Safer Detention Guidance are all vital documents to custody management.

Recruitment

- 11.1 Panels in Worthing and Brighton are currently operating on a reduced number of ICVs.
- 11.2 In Worthing, there are three fully operational ICVs and two long-term sick members. This is impacting on the work-load of the others.
- 11.3 A recruitment programme is currently underway, which looks to appoint a further eight ICVs to the Worthing Panel; three in Brighton and one in Eastbourne.

Visit Report Form/Statistics Report

- 12.1 Comments have been received from ICVs in relation to the layout of the forms currently being used. It has been suggested that the column under PSA 24 be adjusted to allow more room for the visitors' comments column.
- 12.2 Examples of other Authorities' forms are being obtained and a small working group of ICV Panel Co-ordinators will meet to work on the layout of the new form. Amendments made would affect the statistics report layout and it is therefore suggested that the two pieces of work be linked together.

Custody Inspections

- 13.1 Sussex has not so far received notification of a planned HMIC/HMIP joint inspection of custody, but could get an unannounced visit.
- 13.2 Reports on those authority areas already inspected are available on the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) website.
- 13.3 Sussex ICVs are aware of the joint inspection process.

Amended ICV Code of Practice and New Training Manual

- 14.1 The new Codes of Practice have been distributed to all ICVs.
- 14.2 The Scheme Manager has a copy of the new training manual, and sections from the student workbook can be downloaded and distributed to ICVs on request.

Drugs Intervention Project

- 15.1 A new Drugs Intervention Project (DIP) is being trialled in custody centres.
- 15.2 Any detained person admitted into custody for acquisitive crime is required to take a saliva test for opiates. If this proves positive, the detained person is obliged to see a drugs worker while in custody.

15.3 It has been reported that a reduction in crime of between four and seven per cent is being experienced in the areas where this scheme is operating.

Recommended – That

- (1) the Committee approve the custody visiting report form to be redesigned to allow for more in-depth commentary; and
- (2) the Committee invites the ICV representative attends all meetings of this Committee and feeds back relevant matters to ICV panels.

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