

Independent Custody Visitors' Newsletter

September 2009

Hello all Independent Custody Visitors

New Chairman of Sussex Police Authority



At its annual meeting on 30 July 2009, Sussex Police Authority appointed Dr Laurie Bush as the new Chairman of Sussex Police Authority, following Lionel Barnard's chairmanship of two years. Laurie has been a member of the Police Authority since 2003.

New Lead Member for ICV



Ben Duncan has been appointed as the new SPA Lead Member for Independent Custody Visiting, succeeding Margaret Collins, who ceased to be a member of Sussex Police Authority in June this year. Ben has been a member since 2007.

New Head of Detainee Handling



Chief Inspector Peter Mills has been appointed as the new Head of Detainee Handling at Sussex Police. All custody inspectors report directly to Chief Inspector Mills, who is responsible for the performance of the six custody centres in Sussex.

Chief Inspector Mills will update the Community and Justice Command Team on ICV matters arising and ensures that any actions are undertaken.

Revised ICV Scheme

The ICV Scheme has been revised and was formally approved at the annual meeting of the Authority. It is intended to be more user-friendly and can be used as a handbook to remind you about visiting procedures and

roles and responsibilities. I have enclosed a copy for you and you will wish to familiarise yourselves with its contents.

Professional Standards Committee

Sussex Police Authority has recently carried out a complete review of its committee framework. From now on, the Professional Standards Committee will be responsible for organising and overseeing the delivery of custody visiting in Sussex. This will be in place of the stand-alone ICV Committee. Mr John Wales (ICV Co-ordinator for Crawley) remains the ICV representative attending the Professional Standards Committee.

'Link' Members for ICV Panels

Each ICV Panel has a 'link' Police Authority member, who will attend your panel meetings twice a year. Link members are as follows, and they are all members of the Professional Standards Committee:

Brighton – Ben Duncan
Chichester – Peter Bratton
Crawley – Faizul Faiz
Eastbourne – Professor Gordon Bull
Hastings – Godfrey Daniel
Worthing – Andrew Smith

I enclose a list of the key contacts for your panels, which you can easily refer to.

ICVA Annual Conference – 14 November 2009

The Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) is holding its annual conference at the Ramada Jarvis Hotel in Leicester on Saturday 14th November 2009. The conference will provide an opportunity for delegates to listen to keynote speakers as well as to network with other custody visitors from across the UK. I am able to allow 6 ICVs from Sussex to attend, so ideally I would like one person from each panel. Please get in touch by 4pm on Thursday 24th September if you would like to attend.

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Alternative Places of Safety

An 'alternative place of safety' is a purpose-built NHS facility that is specifically designed to assess and detain people with acute mental health disorders. There are various alternative places of safety that have recently opened across Sussex, which provide a more appropriate environment than police cells or custody centres (which were traditionally used as the only places of safety). The Chairman of the Police Authority and the ICV Panel Co-ordinator for Hastings (Tom Wiggins) visited the alternative place of safety in Hastings (Woodlands) on 7th September and learned about the procedures involved in receiving, assessing and detaining patients under Section 136 of the Mental Health Act. Since opening, these facilities have resulted in a significant decrease in detainees with mental health disorders being held in custody cells, which is hugely encouraging.

ICV report form – new question

In June, the ICV Committee received an oral update from Sussex Police on Public Service Agreement (PSA) 24, which seeks to identify any disproportionality relating to race in the criminal justice system. It was stated that it was important to actively engage with suspects and defendants and ask them about their needs and whether these had been respected.

The Committee supported the proposal that Independent Custody Visitors should ascertain whether detainees' individual and cultural needs have been respected and catered for whilst in custody. It was agreed that a simple question would be added to the current ICV report form to capture this information. The new question is 'Have your individual needs been catered for whilst in custody? (These could be physical, cultural, religious, or other) Yes/No.' I will print off some new forms for distribution to all six custody centres.

Independent CCTV Monitoring Scheme

I am in the process of drafting a new Independent CCTV Monitoring Scheme for public place CCTV. This Scheme, which will

be completely separate from the ICV Scheme, is the first of its kind within Sussex. The Authority has appointed a Lead Member for the Scheme and oversight of the Scheme will also be performed by the Authority's Professional Standards Committee. Efficiently administered, the Independent CCTV Monitoring Scheme will promote public confidence in the Sussex Police CCTV system's integrity and transparency. Regular external scrutiny will help to ensure it is more widely accepted.

ICVA – revised codes of practice

The Independent Custody Visiting Association is in the process of revising its national standards and codes of practice on Independent Custody Visiting. You will be kept updated on this matter.

Maternity Leave

For those of you who don't yet know, I am expecting my first baby (due 30th December) and I anticipate going on maternity leave from Friday 4th December 2009. My colleague Dinah Longden will be taking on the role in my absence, and will be in touch with you in due course.

Thank you

Thank you once again to you all for your dedication to Independent Custody Visiting. Your role provides an independent and impartial scrutiny of the police service, which reassures detainees and has a positive impact on public confidence in policing. Thank you also to the Panel Co-ordinators for looking after your teams, I really value and appreciate your support.

Natacha

