



Independent Custody Visiting Scheme

Annual Report

2013-2014

1. INTRODUCTION

The Independent Custody Visiting Scheme enables volunteers from the local community to observe, comment and report on the conditions under which people are detained in police custody. The Scheme provides an independent check on the operation of statutory and other rules governing the welfare of people in custody and helps to promote greater understanding and confidence in this process.

The Police and Crime Commissioner has a statutory duty under Section 51 of the Police Reform Act 2002 to make arrangements for detainees to be visited by independent custody visitors, to keep these arrangements under review, and revise them as required.

2. KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2013/14

Mental health issues

Detainees in custody under S136 orders have continued to be a concern despite reducing numbers. Average numbers of S136 detainees per month two years ago were around 55 but have reduced to 30-35 per month by the start of 2014. This is still considered to be too high and custody to be an unsuitable place for detainees of this category.

Following a significant campaign by the PCC, a new dedicated 4-bed place of safety opened in Feb 2014 at Southmead Hospital in Bristol. Under this provision people can be detained for their own safety, or the safety of others, for a maximum of 72 hours for specialist assessment.

During the month of opening the number of S136 detainees in police custody reduced to 12 across the force area.

New build custody suites

The Project to build and fit out the three new bespoke units at Gloucester Road - Patchway, Ashmead Road - Keynsham and Express Park – Bridgwater ready for custody to move in during July 2014 continues. The accommodation programme will improve both the way the constabulary works and provide a service that will provide better access to local communities now and in the future.

Detention Officers outsourcing

During an extensive review into custody service, the Police and Crime Commissioner examined detailed business cases including an in-house model run by police staff and an option to outsource parts of police custody to a private company.

The outsourcing business case did not demonstrate savings over the in-house model and the in-house model exhibited a robust well developed solution.

3. INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITORS

The scheme currently has 65 custody visiting volunteers.

Ten new custody visitors joined the scheme during the year, 4 at Trinity Road, 2 at Bridgwater and one each at Yeovil, Taunton, Staple Hill and Keynsham. Although no active recruitment is currently taking place, once the visiting schedules for the panels in the new units are finalised any further recruitment needs to be specifically targeted towards groups that are underrepresented on panels, especially young people and individuals from black and minority ethnic communities.

Leavers

13 custody visitors left the scheme this year for various reasons including having reached the 9-year fixed tenure for the scheme, moving out of the constabulary area or having personal commitments which did not allow time for continuing volunteering.

We reported to those who knew him the sad untimely death of one of the custody visitors from the Southmead panel, Roy Pepworth. He is fondly remembered.

Additionally, Lorna Muffett left the Office of the PCC to take up a new employment opportunity. The role of custody visiting scheme administrator for Avon & Somerset will be taken up by Anna Hill, who was recruited following a publically advertised recruitment process. Anna starts in April 2014.

4. STATISTICS

468 visits to custody have taken place and 952 interviews have been held in the period.

- 47% of detainees in custody were interviewed
- 37% were unable to be interviewed for a variety of issues such as the detainee being asleep, in a police interview, at hospital or receiving medical treatment or a recommendation from the custody staff that an individual is not safe to interview.
- 16% refused an interview

This level of refusals will need to be addressed and self introduction by custody visitors is being considered as this has proven very successful in other constabulary areas.

Custody records can be viewed by visitors with permission by the detainee or if custody visitors are concerned about the detainee's welfare but they are unable to gain direct permission due to incapacity. During 2013/14 only 5% of detainee's custody records were viewed by custody visitors.

We will be looking to deliver specific training on the viewing of custody records in the next year – 'what to look for and why', in order to make this a more normal part of the visiting regime.

Please see annex 1 for detailed statistics by custody unit

5. ISSUES ARISING FROM VISITS

Issues raised by custody visitors are dealt with immediately by the detention officer or custody sergeant wherever possible and this provides the most satisfactory resolution for the majority.

If an issue cannot be resolved immediately in this manner the scheme administrator liaises with the Custody Inspectors or the Criminal Justice Manager. This is most suitable for more generic issues, police procedures and relationship management.

Issues raised this year have been primarily related to cleanliness of cells, delays in medical assessment, out of date meals, access to toilet paper and shortages of blankets.

Delays in access to custody for visitors is an ongoing issue at some stations.

On 39% of occasions custody visitors had a delay of 10mins or more before their visit was able to start and on 17 instances visitors had to wait more than 30mins before commencing. These delays are mainly because staff are busy therefore access to the building cannot be gained or there is no member of staff available for escorting. These issues should be resolved at the new units as there will be additional staff on duty.

6. PRIORITIES FOR 2014/15

Transition to the new units

The PCC has set in conjunction with the Chief Constable, a visiting frequency across the constabulary area, against which performance is monitored, measured and published annually.

Once custody has transferred into the new units this will be:

100 visits per year each (approx. 2-3 visits per week) for Patchway, Keynsham and Bridgwater. Yeovil remains as it is currently – 52 visits per year (1 per week)

Visitors

We are expecting to receive resignations from at least 14 custody visitors by the time the new units open; this is mainly due to the new travel distance.

This will still leave the 4 panels with the following volunteer numbers:

Patchway – 15

Keynsham – 12

Bridgwater – 11

Yeovil - 9

Electronic reporting

A report form is being designed and is planned to be in place for July.

Access will be via a secure web portal and custody visitors will input information at the station before ending their visit.

It has been designed to be intuitive with drop down fields where possible to ensure consistency of reporting. The scheme administrator and coordinators will be able to draw statistical reports from the system.

Training on the system and ongoing support will be supplied.

Detention Officers

Staffing will be better focussed on meeting peak demands such as weekends and evenings.

There will be flexibility regarding the deployment of detention officers with 80 full-time and 30 part-time DOs across the Avon and Somerset area working shifts to meet these needs.

DO's will be undertaking detainee transportation with 6 vans across the force picking up those arrested, allowing officers to be freed up to deal with victims, continuing duties etc. Additionally, the use of staff experienced in custody procedures should speed up booking in processes and searches.

The constabulary is undergoing an extensive recruitment programme for DO's. Their training will include a briefing on the role of custody visitors and what they can expect when arriving at custody.

ANNEX 1 – STATISTICS IN DETAIL

1st April 2013-31st March 2014

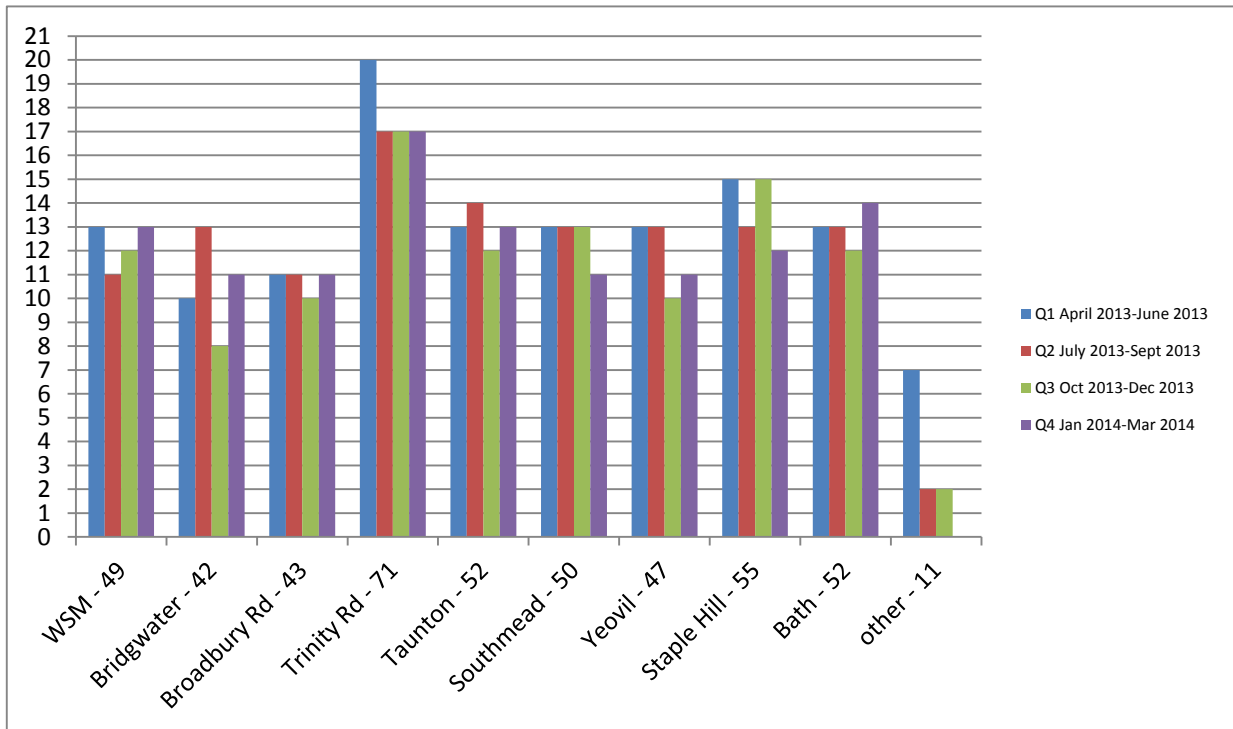
Key Performance Indicators

Performance Issue	Target	Actual	
Number of visits undertaken	490	472 (96%)	Target Not Achieved
Percentage of detainees refusing a visit	15% or less	16%	Target Not Achieved
Percentages of Issues resolved on site	80% or higher	99%	Target Exceeded
Percentage of issues escalated to local criminal justice inspector	15% or less	1%	Target Exceeded
Percentage of issues escalated to Custody Manager or other	5% or less	0%	Target Exceeded

Overview

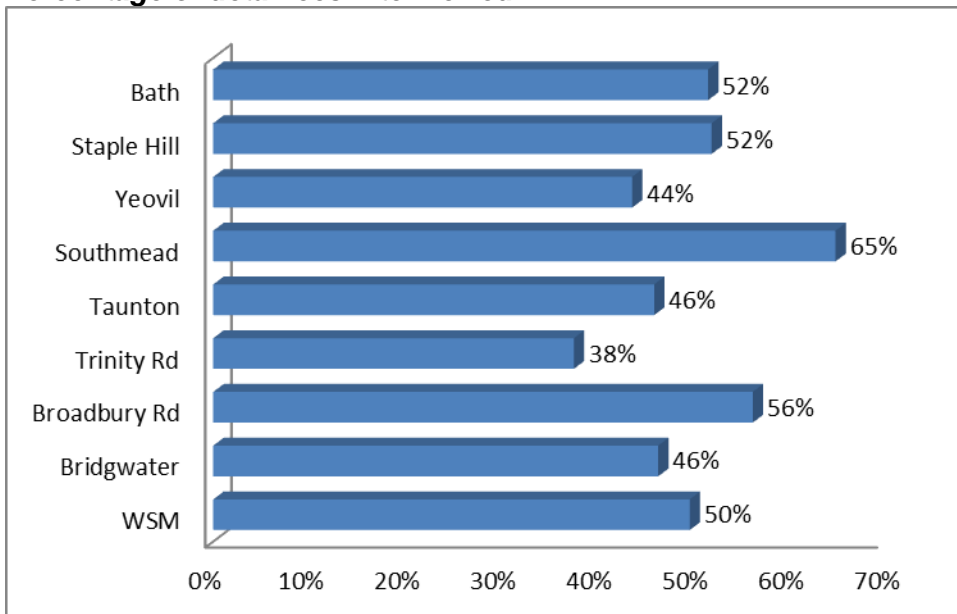
Panel	Target 20013/14	No of Visits	% Target Achieved	No in Custody	No of Detainees interviewed	% of Detainees interviewed	Detainees Refusing Visit	% of Detainees Refusing Visit
BATH	52	52	100%	161	83	52%	23	14%
BRIDGWATER	52	42	81%	110	51	46%	25	23%
BROADBURY ROAD	52	43	83%	185	104	56%	25	14%
SOUTHMEAD	52	50	96%	165	107	65%	26	16%
STAPLE HILL	52	55	106%	233	121	52%	40	17%
TAUNTON	52	52	100%	148	68	46%	38	26%
TRINITY ROAD	78	71	104%	652	245	38%	92	14%
WESTON-S-MARE	52	49	94%	141	70	50%	26	18%
YEOVIL	52	47	90%	165	72	44%	25	15%
OTHER	6	11	183%	53	35	66%	5	9%
TOTAL	490	472	96%	2013	956	47%	324	16%

Number of visits per quarter by station

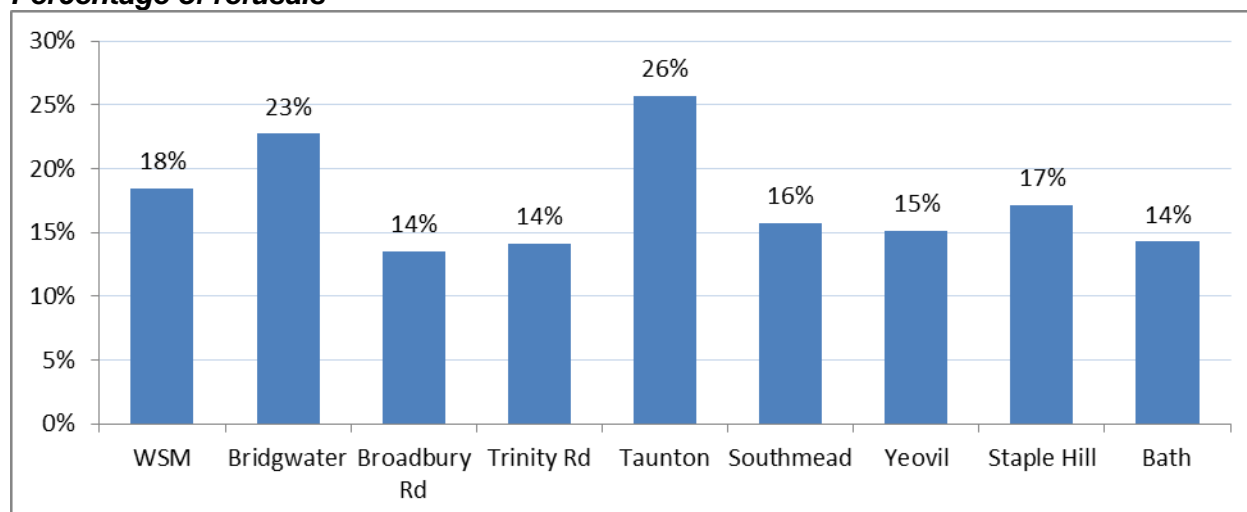


In addition to visits to designated custody suites listed above, regular visits were carried out at the temporary custody facility during the Glastonbury Festival and ad hoc visits to non-designated custody units at Cribbs Causeway shopping centre and Minehead police station.

Percentage of detainees interviewed



Percentage of refusals



Length of visits

	<30mins	30-45mins	46-59mins	1-1.5hrs	>1.5hrs	n/k
WSM	10	14	7	3		14
Bridgwater	22	14	2	1		3
Broadbury Rd	24	14	2	2	1	
Trinity Rd	10	29	12	9	6	5
Taunton	32	11	3	1		4
Southmead	14	18	7			11
Yeovil	34	8	2	1	2	
Staple Hill	12	19	10	8		5
Bath	20	23	2	2		5
other	8	1		1		1
TOTAL	186	151	47	28	9	48

Delay (from arrival to start of visit)

	<5mins	5-9mins	10-15mins	16-30mins	>30mins	n/k
WSM	2	11	16	5	3	11
Bridgwater	4	22	6	8	1	1
Broadbury Rd	7	14	18	2	2	
Trinity Rd	20	27	19	3	2	
Taunton	8	27	8	6	2	
Southmead	10	17	17	4		2
Yeovil	14	20	6	6		1
Staple Hill	4	20	16	11	3	
Bath	16	20	6	3	4	3
other	3	3	2	2		1
TOTAL	88	181	114	50	17	19

Times are n/k where entries are missing from report forms