



Independent Custody Visiting Scheme

Annual Report

2015-2016

1. INTRODUCTION

The Independent Custody Visiting Scheme uses 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 2015/16

New Information Management System, Niche

In September 2015, the information management system Guardian was replaced by Niche, a system used by several other Forces. All custody staff were trained over the summer and autumn of 2015 which left the custody units running with the minimum staffing levels at times. Following its implementation, there was some anticipated disruption and delays to detainees being booked in while staff familiarised themselves with the new system. ICVs were not really affected by this and there was no increase in the time waited for visits to start. Once the festive period had passed things settled down and are now working well.

New Head of Custody

In August 2015, Chief Inspector Ian Norrie moved to another role within the Constabulary and Chief Inspector Mark Runacres took over the role as Head of Custody. Mark is now the Force Custody Manager responsible for ensuring the successful running of the Constabulary's custody units as well as the Force ID Unit and Firearms Licensing Unit. Mark has over 20 years police service and has always worked in uniform roles within Bristol including Response, Community Safety and most recently the Inspector for Neighbourhood Policing. He also has additional responsibilities as the new Tactical Firearms Commander and as a trained Hostage and Crisis Negotiator.

3. INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITORS

The scheme currently has 47 custody visiting volunteers (-9 on last year) and is still one of the largest schemes in the country. 8 new custody visitors joined the scheme during the year; 2 at Patchway, 3 at Keynsham, 1 at Bridgwater and 3 at Yeovil. .

ICV Demographics

84% of the ICVs completed a short demographics questionnaire in March 2016.

The average age of an ICV is 57 years old, with a visiting history of just over three years. Gender wise, the ICVs are split equally. Those categorising themselves as anything other than 'white' remains steady at 5%. 15% of ICVs consider themselves disabled. 90% of ICVs classify themselves as heterosexual, and there was a 50/50 split between those that upheld a faith and those that did not. 44% of visitors are retired, 44% are in some form of employment (including self-employment) and the remaining 12% was made up of those studying, those volunteering elsewhere and one ICV noted they were a carer. 61% volunteer elsewhere as well as custody visiting.

Leavers

18 ICVs left the scheme in this period for various reasons, including reaching the end of the 9 year fixed tenure, moving out of the constabulary area or having personal commitments which did not allow time to continue volunteering. Patchway were particularly affected by

high turnover, and a small number of ICVs went off the radar across the panels and were unable to be contacted.

OPCC Custody Visiting Officer

Anna Hill continued as the Custody Visiting Officer for the period.

4. STATISTICS

291 visits to police custody took place and 1049 interviews were held during the period.

- 44% of detainees in custody were interviewed. (no change from last year)
- 39% 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. (+7% on last year)
- 28% refused an interview (+3% from last year, +11% since April 2014)
- There were 10 aborted visits this year; unlike last year all aborted visits were down to ICV issues rather than the reasons given last year around staffing and busy custody units.

As the level of refusal continues to rise, further discussion around self-introduction needs to take place to come to an Avon and Somerset scheme decision. There is great interest in this topic amongst the ICVs with almost every ICV having a strong opinion on the matter; a small number have suggested they may resign from their role as ICV should self-introduction be taken forward. Avon and Somerset is currently the only Force area to not use self-introduction. Bridgwater trialled self-introduction in Q3 and Q4 and saw a reduction in the number of refusals. The conversion rates of those available for an interview to those spoken to across the units are as follows:

Q3:

Yeovil – 85%

Keynsham – 76%

Patchway – 75%

Bridgwater – 88%

Q4:

Yeovil – 86%

Keynsham – 74%

Patchway – 73%

Bridgwater – 90%

It has been agreed that all panels will trial the self-introduction method for Q2 of 2016/17 and there will be an opportunity to anonymously feedback after the trial to vote on the method of introduction taken forward.

Custody records can be viewed by visitors with permission by the detainee or if visitors are concerned about the detainee's welfare but they are unable to gain direct permission due to incapacity. In June 2015, every ICV received training from ICVA on what to look for in a custody record. In September 2015, the Constabulary moved to the Niche system and work is being done to create a redacted Niche custody record to use as a training document in the autumn 2016 panel meetings.

During 2015/16 5% of detainee's custody records were viewed by custody visitors which is a +2% improvement from last year, however guidance from ICVA and the National Preventative Mechanism suggests ICVs should be reviewing the custody records of those detainees on Level 2 observations ('Rouse and Respond') and this will be a focus for 2016-2017 as well as viewing CCTV as part of the custody records checking process.

Delays in access to custody for visitors have been monitored since the new PFI police centres opened in late August/early September 2014. For the year 2015/16 the average wait times across the units are:

Patchway – 9 minutes (-5 from last year)
Keynsham – 10 minutes (no change from last year)
Bridgwater – 8 minutes (-4 from last year)
Yeovil – 5 minutes (no change from last year)

The number of detainees at the new police centres continues to be lower than anticipated. The average numbers of detainees in 2015/16 were:

Patchway – 12 detainees (-2 from last year)
Keynsham – 10 detainees (+1 from last year)
Bridgwater – 7 detainees (-1 from last year)
Yeovil – 3 detainees (no change from last year)

*Please see annex 1 for detailed statistics by custody unit
Please see annex 2 for entry delay times and number of detainees*

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 and/or the Head of Custody.

Issues raised for this period have been minor and almost all have been in relation to building and contract issues at the custody sites. The availability of solicitors was a more prominent issue last year than the previous year and there were a number of strikes by solicitors. There were also a small number of concerns raised around staffing levels with reports of very busy custody units and longer wait times. On two occasions ICVs were refused access to juvenile detainees due to an Appropriate Adult not being present. This is against the ICV Codes of Practice and as a result the Standard Operating Procedure document for custody staff was updated to highlight this information and communicated to all staff.

There have been some issues ICVs have raised that may not have been brought to the attention of custody staff through any other means. Some changes ICVs played a key role in implementing are:

- The introduction of 'Sporks' – Better quality spoon/fork contraptions for at risk detainees as standard cutlery can be easily snapped.
- The delivery of reading material for detainees – Following comments made by ICVs, regular deliveries of reading material now take place at each of the custody units.
- The regular offering of feminine hygiene packs – ICVs highlight that feminine hygiene packs were not being routinely offered to female detainees and was addressed as a result.

The custody staff were praised by the ICVs for dealing with matters quickly and efficiently. On 177 of the report forms there were compliments made about the custody staff and how their visit was received.

6. PRIORITIES FOR 2015/16

Number of visits for 2015/2016:

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.

For the financial year 2016/2017 there will be a total of 280 visits:

76 visits per year each (approx. 1 visit every 4-5 days) for Patchway, Keynsham and Bridgwater.

Yeovil will remain as it is currently – 52 visits per year (1 per week)

Electronic reporting

During this period extensive work was undertaken to launch an electronic report form. Unfortunately, the solution the OPCC website provider offered had numerous technical issues which ultimately resulted in another solution being sought. After several demonstrations of off-the-shelf packages, Dorset OPCC have designed an in-house solution that would provide an economical option for all regional counterparts. This is being explored further.

Diversity of ICVs

The diversity of ICVs has remained static at 5%. Sue has made it clear in her priorities for her second term that she wants to put focus on recruiting diverse officers and a dedicated Chief Inspector who will be leading on this priority. As part of this work, ICV promotional and application materials will be reviewed and with the help of the dedicated officer, links will be made with engaged community groups across the Force area in order to better promote the ICV role.

Regional ICV Scheme

2015-2016 saw a number of personnel changes in the managing of the ICV scheme in the wider region. Regional collaboration work was put on hold while new members of staff concentrated on familiarising themselves with the scheme and their visitors. Picking up this work will be a focus for 2016-2017 with hopes of a regional electronic reporting system and a standardised recruitment process.

7. UPDATES FROM PANEL COORDINATORS

Bridgwater – Panel Coordinator Rob Snow

The scheme has been working well in Bridgwater with no major issues to report on. It has proven difficult to contact some visitors at times, but with no major consequences or visits compromised. 1 visitor has left, due to relocation. 1 visitor is possibly going to be leaving in November, when his badge runs out. We have had a new visitor join the team but they have yet to complete a visit due to contact problems. I believe all visits are being carried out during their scheduled periods. There are still not very many custody records being looked at, however this maybe down to the fact that visitors are getting to speak to more detainees, so are happy with their stays. There were a couple of occasions in which visitors could have used the opportunity to check the digital logs (Section 136 detainee/Juvenile). This was flagged at the subsequent panel meeting and was made clear that this would have been the right time to check. It would appear some visitors don't like to, or feel that they are putting

extra pressure on the custody staff if they ask. Helpfully, the Insp made it clear that is not the case.

Patchway – Panel Coordinator Annaphie Rogers

On the whole we have had a good year at Patchway though there have been a few problems. Firstly the lack of awareness of some members of the custody staff about the ICVs role and right to speak to detainees. Fortunately on these occasions the visiting CVs were well experienced and not afraid to dispute the position with the Inspector on duty at the time. However when these incidents were reported back to the Inspector in charge of custody, Andy Brain, he took immediate steps to speak to custody staff involved, explain our roles and rectify the situation for the future visits.

A number of CVs have remarked on the fact that the staff set up in the new custody centres makes them less “user friendly” than the old centres. In the previous smaller suites 1 or 2 detention officers would be responsible for the overall care of the detainees, offering basics such as blankets, drinks and reading material as a matter of course. Now it seems that items are not routinely offered and are often only provided if requested. Many detainees that we visit don't know that these basics are available. There seems to be no clear guidance as to when or which staff should offer the basics, and no individual officer assigned to take responsibility for the detainees' welfare in this respect.

As with the other new custody centres we have had a problem with algae in the exercise yards due to the unusually wet weather over winter and early spring. We had increased our number of visitors to 14 but for various reasons some have left over the last year which now leaves us with 11. To finish on a positive note - After highlighting the fact that the plastic spoons used for the detainees' meals are brittle and can be broken and used for self-harm or as a weapon, a number of “sporks” with rubber prongs have been purchased for the use of vulnerable detainees. This demonstrates that we can make a difference.

Keynsham – Panel Coordinator John Sommer

On our visits we like to observe the interaction between the detainees and the detention staff. This tells us more often than not that the staff are carrying out their duty of care in spirit as well as according to regulations. When a detainee has raised an issue we have been able to check with the staff and look at the custody records. If there has been an omission, which is rare, these are rapidly corrected or a reasonable explanation and reassurance provided. Rarely have we had to escalate our enquiries to Inspector level. The team of visitors enthusiastically fulfil their role and are keen to add to their knowledge at the often lively panel meetings with the Inspector. The team carry out extra visits during the Glastonbury Festival as the Keynsham Suite provides custody facilities for the Festival.

Yeovil – Panel Coordinator Gordon Czapiewski

At the start of the period we had 10 CVs and at the end had 9 CVs. In the period we lost 3 ICVs and had 2 new joiners. There were 52 visits in the period. 2 visits could not be completed owing to the Custody Suite being closed because of staff shortages. On another 2 occasions the Custody Staff refused access to ICVs as they were extremely busy and could not guarantee their safety. We worked closely with the Detention staff whilst they became familiar with Niche. Issues were raised around rules regarding access to juveniles and communicating with non-English speakers.

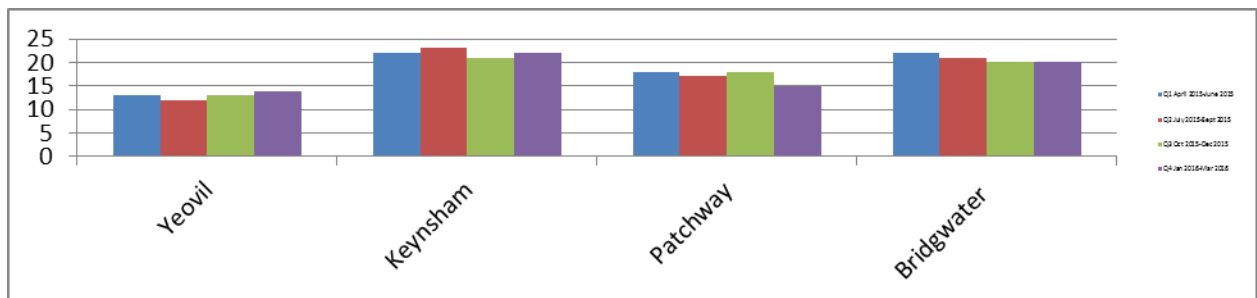
ANNEX 1 – STATISTICS IN DETAIL

1st April 2015-31st March 2016

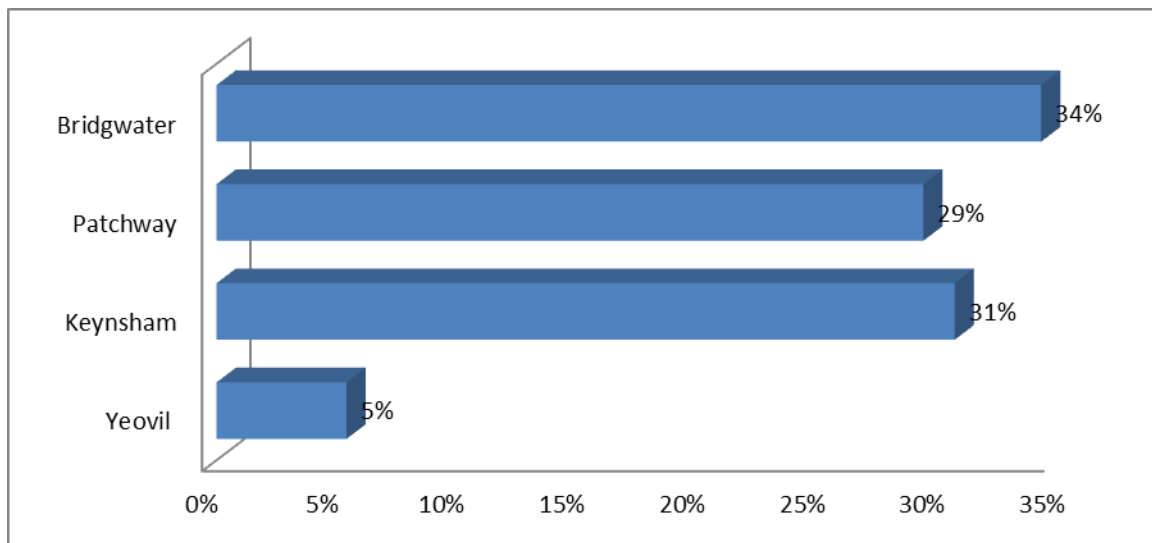
Key Performance Indicators

Performance Issue	Target	Actual	
Number of visits undertaken	271	291 (107%)	Target Exceeded
Percentage of detainees refusing a visit	16% or less	27%	Target Not Achieved
Percentages of Issues resolved on site	80% or higher	97%	Target Exceeded
Percentage of issues escalated to local criminal justice inspector	15% or less	3%	Target Exceeded
Percentage of issues escalated to Custody Manager or other	5% or less	2%	Target Exceeded

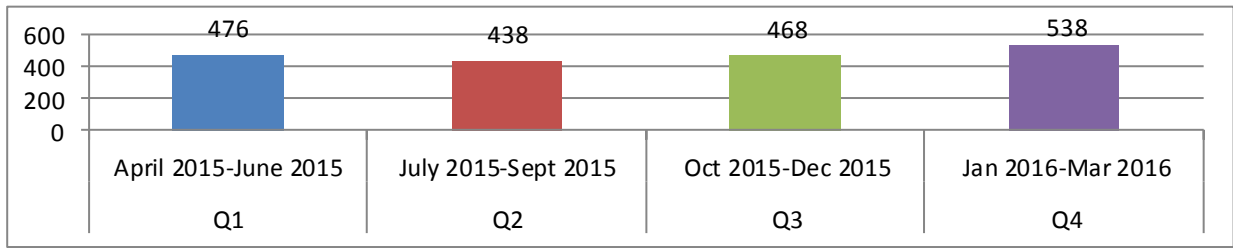
Number of visits undertaken



Percentage of detainees interviewed



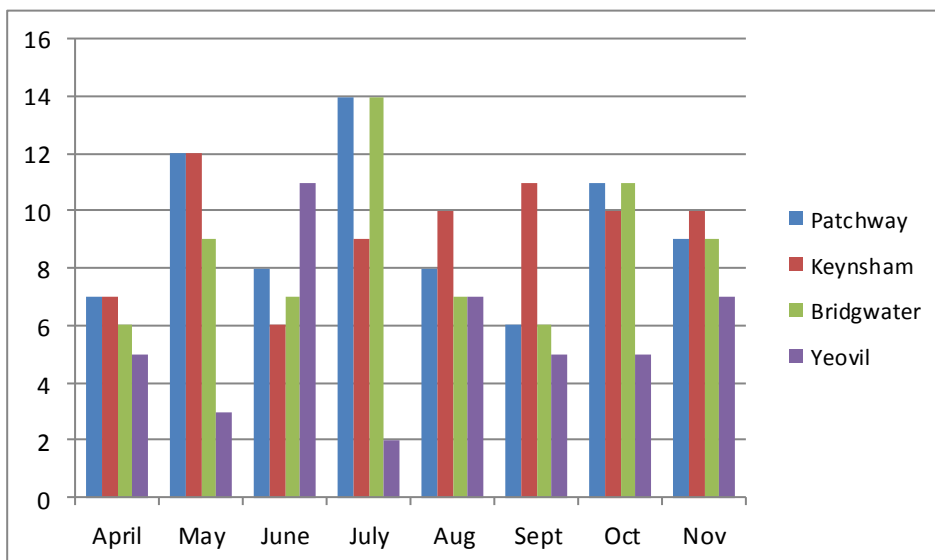
Number of detainees in Custody



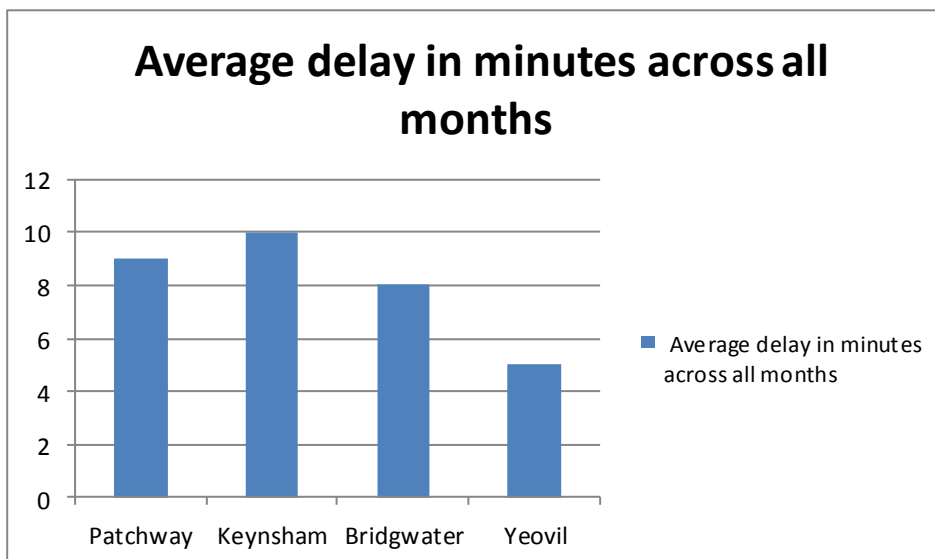
ANNEX 2 – DELAY TIMES AND NUMBER OF DETAINEES

1st April 2015 – 31st March 2016

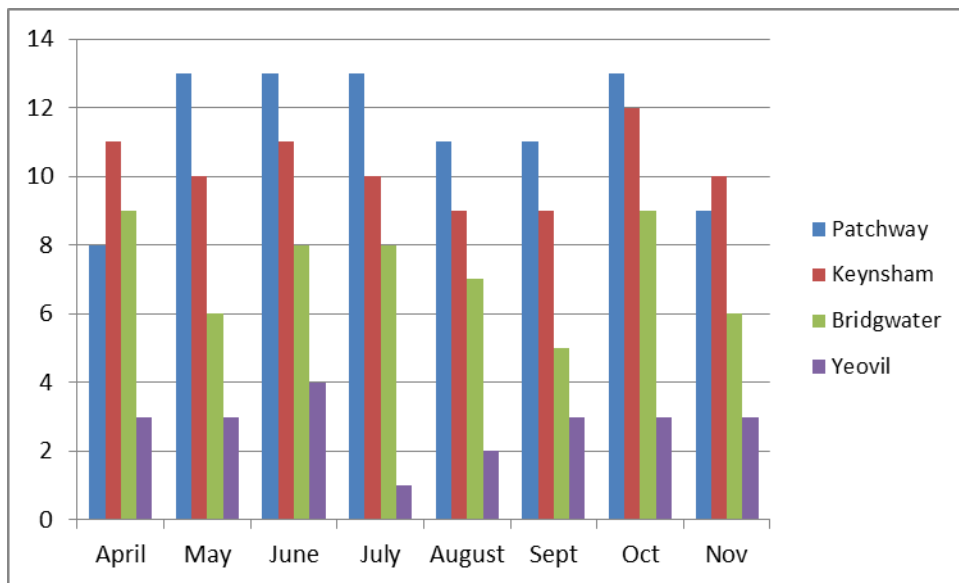
Average delay to visit start time in minutes by month



Average delay time in minutes across all months



Average number of detainees by month



Average number of detainees across all months

