

**GWENT POLICE AUTHORITY**  
**Professional Standards Committee**

**Date:** 10<sup>th</sup> November 2009 **Item No: 4a**

**Heading:** Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Update

**Report Author:** Chief Executive

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**SUMMARY**

This report provides an update on the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme.

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**RECOMMENDATION(S)**

Members are asked to note the report.

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**1. BACKGROUND**

1.1 Independent Custody Visiting is the well established system whereby volunteers attend police stations to check on the treatment of detainees and the conditions in which they are held and that their rights and entitlements are being observed. It offers protection to both detainees and the police and provides reassurance to the community at large. The responsibility for organising and overseeing the delivery of Independent Custody Visiting lies with the Police Authority in consultation with the Chief Constable. The Authority is a member of the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA), a national organisation which works with police authorities and the Home Office in support of the custody visiting schemes.

1.2 Any issues of concern are raised directly, and dealt with, by the Head of Custody. It is acknowledged that the Custody Staff works closely with the Secretariat to consider ways of raising awareness of the Custody Visiting process amongst custody staff and has attended and contributed to training sessions and meetings.

**2. PROPOSAL FOR CONSIDERATION BY COMMITTEE AND CURRENT POSITION**

2.1 There are currently nine visitors on the Scheme. On the 20<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> October Mr David Bayliss, the Business and Members Services Manager and the Business Support Officer held interviews for seven of the eleven potential

visitors. One did not attend. Three others were unable to attend so alternative arrangements are being made to meet with them as soon as possible.

- 2.2 Prior to the interview stage, the potential custody visitors undertook an introductory training session. It was decided that this would be useful in order to give a realistic view to potential visitors as to what would be expected of them.
- 2.3 Any successful candidates will be appointed subject to vetting and reference checks. They will attend an induction session and a training event with ICVA before carrying out visits. New visitors will initially be paired with more experienced custody visitors.
- 2.3 The presentation of Long Service awards for custody visitors was agreed by this committee in November 2008. The awards will be presented at the next Chief Constable's Commendation Ceremony on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2009.
- 2.4 A total of 112 visits have been undertaken so far in 2009. 74 out of 99 possible visits were undertaken in the first 6 months of the year. Since 1<sup>st</sup> July 2009, 38 of a possible 40 visits have taken place.
- 2.5 The ICV Annual General Meeting took place on 23<sup>rd</sup> September. Visitors were provided with an update on the scheme and following the meeting undertook training delivered by Chief Inspector Ruth Price, Head of Custody. Issues discussed included Places of Safety, Health and Safety assessments of non-designated stations, the NPIA Inspection of Custody and the potential Joint Inspection of Custody by HMIC and HMIP.
- 2.6 Visitors were informed that Ebbw Vale Police Station would no longer be used as a custody unit for Health and Safety reasons. It has now been removed from the rota.
- 2.7 Councillor Williams and two visitors attended the South Wales Police Authority ICV Seminar on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2009 in Porthcawl. The event was deemed to be extremely useful.
- 2.8 Issues raised by visitors during the past four months were fairly minor and related to estates/ maintenance matters.

### **3. STAFFING/PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 There are some implications as far as staff resources are concerned. Councillor W John Williams is the lead member and the introduction of performance measures and therefore a more professional scheme will more than likely lead to an increase the time spent on Independent Custody Visiting by both the secretariat and lead member. As a result of this Mr David Bayliss has been nominated as substitute lead member for Custody Visiting.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Custody visitors are appointed on a voluntary basis and as such there is no facility for financial remuneration. However, all reasonable travelling expenses incurred in relation to custody visiting matters are reimbursed by the Police Authority.

#### **5. CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 There has been no consultation on the content of this report.

#### **6. PROJECT ASSESSMENT FOR EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY MATTERS**

- 6.1 This project/proposal has been considered against the general duty to promote equality, as stipulated under the Police Authority's Single Equality Scheme, and has been assessed not to discriminate against any particular group.
- 6.2 Whilst due cognisance is given to the requirements of the Authority's Equality Scheme in the recruitment, training and operation of Custody Visiting, the over-riding consideration must be the health and safety of custody visitors whilst undertaking their role.

#### **7. RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 The duty to run an Independent Custody Visitor Scheme is a statutory responsibility on the Police Authority. The potential risk of not providing a scheme is two-fold. Firstly a breach of statutory duty, but more importantly the failure to ensure that detainees are afforded the opportunity to have the independent check on how the force operate within custody suites in the area.

A risk assessment has been undertaken and measures have been put in place to eliminate or minimise the risk to those involved in the visiting process. The risk is therefore now assessed as low.

#### **8. STAYING AHEAD (2011 REVIEW)**

- 8.1 There are no direct implications for Staying Ahead 2011 Review.

#### **9. CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 Custody Visiting is essential in providing independent scrutiny of the treatment of detained persons and the conditions in which they are held. The scheme offers a mutual level of protection and helps to build partnerships between the police and the communities they serve.

**10. CONTACT OFFICER**

10.1 Siân Curley, Business and Member Services Manager (Scheme Administrator)

**11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

11.1 Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Handbook (version 5)

11.2 The DNA of Our Society: A guide to developing best practice for Independent Custody Visiting.

11.3 Visiting Times – Editions of the ICVA publication

**12. APPENDICES**

12.1 None