

NORTHERN JOINT POLICE BOARD

29 AUGUST 2008

Agenda Item	
Report No	

INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING SCHEME – ANNUAL REPORT 2007/08

Report by the Clerk

Summary

This Report invites the Board to note the appended Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Annual Report for 2007/08, already submitted by the Clerk on behalf of the Board to meet the requested deadline for inclusion in the Scottish Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Progress Report for 2007/08.

Background

1. As Members are aware, the Board operates an Independent Custody Visiting Scheme, whereby independent, volunteer members of the community, following appropriate training, make random, unannounced visits to police stations, allowing them the opportunity to inspect and check upon the conditions and welfare of those held in police custody.
2. The Board is affiliated to the Independent Custody Visiting Association, a voluntary organisation that promotes the custody visiting process nationally, through advocacy, training, publicity and ongoing support to all involved in the process. The Association publishes a quarterly magazine and an Annual Report. In recognition of the different applicable legal and guidance framework in Scotland, it also publishes a separate Scottish Annual Report on the operation of Independent Custody Visiting in Scotland, incorporating reports from each individual Police Authority/Joint Board operating a Scheme.
4. The Clerk has submitted the appended Report on behalf of the Board for inclusion in the Scottish Annual Report for 2007/08.

Recommendation

The Board is asked to note the terms of the appended Report.

Signature

Designation Assistant Clerk

Date 19 August 2008

Author Mrs R Moir, Assistant Clerk

Northern Joint Police Board Independent Custody Visiting Scheme – Annual Report 2007/08

BACKGROUND

Custody Visiting was introduced in the Northern Constabulary area in 2000 with the first visits made in June 2000. The scheme was initially run as a pilot project with visits being undertaken in Inverness only. Following the success of the pilot the scheme was gradually rolled out to a further four stations – Dingwall and Alness (October 2000), Aviemore (February 2002) and Nairn (March 2002).

The Board initially appointed 20 visitors in 2000. Numbers have fluctuated since, with 9 of the original visitors reappointed in 2006 for a third 3-year period. At 31 March 2008 the number of visitors stood at 11.

STATION VISITS

Visits are made to the stations as follows:

Station	Frequency of Visits
Inverness	One per week
Dingwall	One per three weeks
Alness	One per month
Aviemore	One per month
Nairn	One per month

Breakdown of visits per station

During the period 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008 79 visits were made with 254 detainees held in custody at the time of the visits. Of these, 68 agreed to a visit.

Station	No. of Visits	No. of Detainees	No. Detainees seen
Inverness	37	241	61
Dingwall	11	2	1
Alness	10	0	0
Aviemore	9	5	2
Nairn	12	6	4
Overall Totals	79	254	68

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

Issues Raised

The majority of concerns raised by detainees relate to:

- desire for a wash
- request for medication or for extra blanket/clothing
- whether or not their solicitor or family member had been contacted.

Issues relating to the management of the custody suites have included:

- Delays in access to the Custody Suite
- Lack of familiarity with the Scheme among new custody staff

Developments

The Scottish Local Government elections in May 2007 saw the appointment of a new Northern Joint Police Board (NJPB), which has appointed an Independent Custody Visiting Sub-Committee of 5 Members to appoint Custody Visitors and to consider matters arising from Custody Visitors' reports.

Northern Constabulary's custody scheme for the Inverness, Ross, Cromarty & Skye and the Badenoch, Strathspey & Nairn Command areas, introduced in 2006, has seen most of those brought into custody during daytime hours Monday to Friday transported to the Inverness cell suite. This arrangement has continued to have implications for the scheduling of visits, given the relatively low probability at those times of anyone being in custody in the smaller stations covered by the Scheme.

Group Activity

Issues raised by detainees, police or visitors are discussed at regular visitors' meetings. These are generally chaired by the Scheme Administrator and attended by Inspector Gordon Macleod, Northern Constabulary's Custody Visiting Liaison Officer. Members of the NJPB ICV Sub-Committee have also attended. These meetings offer visitors an opportunity to network and share experience.

A number of visitors attended the Scottish Annual Conference held at The Scottish Police College, Tulliallan, on 20 October 2007. Visitors also had an opportunity in August 2007 to visit the Northern Constabulary Firearms Training Range.

Training

Continuous development is seen as a cornerstone of custody visiting throughout Scotland. A training session on drugs and alcohol issues was held in December 2007, led by Inspector Bob Pollock of Northern Constabulary.

THE YEAR AHEAD

Further local training is planned for 2008/09, including training on equality and diversity issues. Opportunities to boost recruitment will be explored.