

What is an Independent Custody Visitor?

Independent Custody Visitors are members of the local community who make unannounced visits to the Police Station and Guernsey Border Agency. They are able to observe, comment and report on the conditions of detention and the operation of the custody facility, thereby ensuring compliance with the Police Powers and Criminal Evidence (Bailiwick of Guernsey) Law 2003.

Who can act as an Independent Custody Visitor?

Independent Custody Visitors can come from a variety of backgrounds and sections of the community. However, they must have had no direct or indirect involvement in the criminal justice system as this could be seen as compromising the independence and integrity of the scheme.

All panel members must be over the age of 18.

What skills and qualifications do I need?

No formal qualifications are required for this role. The Committee for Home Affairs is looking for individuals who are fair and objective with the ability to communicate effectively with a wide range of people and write accurate reports.

Individuals will, however, need to gain a thorough understanding of detainees' rights and Police responsibilities.

How are they selected and trained?

Volunteers wishing to become Independent Custody Visitors will need to complete an application form and attend an interview.

Successful applicants will be invited to attend a one day information/training day.

The training programme is made up of practical and theoretical exercises covering all aspects of custody visiting and is complemented by a set of guidelines and the basic principles of the Police Powers and Criminal Evidence (Bailiwick of Guernsey) Law (2003). Those appointed are issued with an official identity card, which allows them to be admitted to the custody area of the Police Station.

Further training sessions will be arranged locally as a means of informing Independent Custody Visitors on new developments and most importantly sharing experiences.

Independent Custody Visitors are appointed on 3 year contracts and are subject to the completion of a satisfactory probationary period.

What about Salary?

As this is a volunteer scheme, Independent Custody Visitors do not receive any payment for their time. However, individuals are entitled to receive reimbursement for any expenses that he/she may incur.

When and where are visits made?

Independent Custody Visitors will be required to visit the Police Station once a month in pairs with the actual timing of visits determined by the Independent Custody Visitors.

What happens when a visit is made?

Independent Custody Visitors must maintain their independence and impartiality. They do not take sides but merely look, listen

and report on what is said to them. On arrival at the Police Station, Independent Custody Visitors will be escorted to the custody area. Independent Custody Visitors may occasionally be denied immediate access for safety reasons and be asked to wait or to return later to complete their visit. The detainees will be identified by their custody numbers and strict rules of confidentiality exist.

Interviews with detainees are, for Independent Custody Visitors protection, normally carried out within sight but out of hearing of a police officer.

Reporting procedures

A report is completed for each visit made. It records that a visit has taken place and provides an insight into the running of the custody area at the time of the visit. Copies of the reports are provided for the Services and Home Affairs. They provide a vital source of information on the environmental and welfare conditions of detainees. The information in the report form is analysed and the key action areas are recorded in addition to the issues which require attention.

What if I have previous convictions?

Due to the nature and location of this role all members of this scheme must undergo a full vetting procedure. Having previous convictions does not automatically exclude you from the job, it will depend on the nature of the offence and the time that has elapsed since the conviction.

I'm interested! How do I find out more?

If you are interested in learning more about becoming an Independent Custody Visitor please contact Home Affairs, Central Services on 717359.

INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITORS

Are you interested in volunteering to work as an Independent Custody Visitor?

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