

## **INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING SCHEME**

Independent custody visiting is a national scheme of volunteers who attend local police stations, unannounced, at varying times of the day and night, to check on the treatment of detainees and the conditions in which they are held and ensure that their rights and entitlements are being observed. Independent custody visitors must be impartial. They do not take sides but look, listen and report on what they find in the custody suite. Custody visitors must report on their findings after each visit, their reports provide an insight into the running of the custody area at the time of the visit

Independent custody visitors are members of the local community who come from a variety of backgrounds and sections of the community. To become an Independent Custody Visitor you must be over 18 and have no direct involvement in the criminal justice system. This maintains the independence of the scheme as a whole.

During 2007, 86 visits were made, and of the 443 people in custody during these visits, 261 people chose to speak to a Custody Visitor, (59 %). Gloucestershire Police Authority currently has 26 Custody Visitors – 12 men and 14 women, working in three panels.

In the last 12 months, 5 custody visitors retired/resigned and Authority members would like to thank all of them for their hard work and commitment. To fill the vacancies created during 2006 and the beginning of 2007 a successful recruitment campaign was conducted, with 27 applications received. This led to the appointment of ten new custody visitors with effect from 1 April 2007.