



**MPA**

**Metropolitan Police Authority**

**Barking and Dagenham  
Independent Custody  
Visiting Panel**

**Annual Report 2007**



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# Introduction

Welcome to the annual report of the Barking and Dagenham Independent Custody Visiting Panel.

The report covers the period from January 2007 to December 2007

The purpose of the report is to:

- Evaluate the panel's performance
- Provide the local community and the MPA with information about the visits made including the treatment of those held in custody
- Set out issues and concerns that have arisen
- Set out the objectives for 2008

The Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) is an independent statutory body, which exists to make sure that London's police are accountable for the services they provide to people in the capital. The MPA has 23 Members who scrutinise and support the work of the police. The MPA promotes equality and diversity within the police service and is working in partnership to ensure all those who live and work in the capital are treated fairly and with respect.

The MPA has a legal obligation under the Police Reform Act 2002 for a custody visiting scheme to operate in its area. In April 2007 the MPA brought together the custody visiting arrangements managed by the boroughs into one London scheme. The scheme has the full support and cooperation of the Commissioner and the Borough Commander for Barking and Dagenham, but is independent of the police. The MPA holds overall responsibility for the scheme's management and administration; a member of MPA staff is responsible for supporting the panel.

Prospective custody visitors are volunteers from within the community. The MPA is responsible for recruiting, selecting and appointing all custody visitors and tries to ensure a balance of age, gender and ethnicity. Successful applicants to the scheme are given training in all aspects of a custody visitor's role and responsibilities. Custody visiting is governed by a range of legislation and guidance including the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984 as well as Home Office Codes of Practice and National Standards. This year's annual report covers the period January 2007 to December 2007. This new reporting arrangement brings Barking and Dagenham in line with other parts of the London ICV Scheme.

# Chairperson's report

# Aims and achievements

The aims and objectives of the panel are laid out in the Home Office Codes of Practice and the National Standards governing Independent Custody Visiting as well as the MPA ICV Handbook.

The primary objective of the panel is to make unannounced visits to police stations in the borough to check and report on the treatment of detainees in police cells to ensure their rights and entitlements are being observed.

In the previous annual report the following specific aims and objectives were set out for 2007:

- To maintain a programme of weekly visits to Dagenham police station at variable times including occasional night visits
- To include visits to Barking police station in the visit programme
- To hold 6 weekly panel meetings
- To continue to monitor the standards of cleaning and the temperature of cells and the provision for detainees' hygiene needs
- To maintain and improve upon the level of communication with Barking and Dagenham police, the custody manager during panel meetings and custody staff during visits
- To recruit more younger people to the panel
- To ensure that the panel reflects the diversity of the borough
- To attend local events such as summer fairs to increase public awareness, publicise the work of the panel and to recruit new members
- To enable panel members to attend refresher training courses and to use the panel meetings as an opportunity to provide training

The panel made a total of 42 visits throughout 2007 to Barking and Dagenham police stations. Against a target of 52 visits to be carried out during the year at a rate of one visit per week, this represents an achievement of 81% of the annual target.

In the majority of cases, there were no significant issues raised. However, there are some recurring concerns identified from the visit report forms. Of most common occurrence was the issue surrounding cleanliness of the shower and wash areas. As well as this, untidiness of the FME room, in particular the need to empty the clinical waste and sharps bin on a more regular basis to prevent overfilling.

Visits have been very well spread out through the week. Only Sunday has experienced fewer visits than average and is the only exception to this even distribution. The distribution of visits throughout the day indicates a preference for visits during the hours of 08:00-19:59, with 90.4% of the total number of visits taking place during this 12 hour time period. As a result, there were relatively few visits during the unsocial hours of 20:00-23:59 (2), 00:00-03:59 (2) and no visits taking place between 04:00-07:59.

A greater number of visits need to be undertaken during the 12 hour period of 20:00-07:59 and increase the current figure from 4 visits (9.6% of total visits). Whilst it is appreciated that these are unsocial hours and detainees are often taking advantage of their continuous rest period, it is still essential that some visits are carried during these quieter periods over the course of the year.

A barrier to achieving this goal has been the perennial challenge to recruit sufficient members and to retain these members. With fewer than sufficient members for much of the year, fulfilling the central objectives has proved difficult.

In particular, it has not been possible to recruit any young people to the panel and the panel remains relatively old with seven members over 60 and with the youngest panel member being 44 years old. It is not possible to yet say how well the panel matches the diversity of the borough in other respects, however there will be an opportunity to monitor the diversity of the panel quite soon.

With an improved marketing and advertising strategy for 2008, and in continually developing partnerships and investigating new avenues to recruit, it is hoped that 2008 will see a more successful recruitment campaign to bring numbers to a satisfactory level.

Relations with the police remain effective with both the custody manager and panel members having invested a lot of effort to ensure lines of communication are kept clear and that matters requiring a response to the panel are dealt with effectively.

# Recruitment and membership

Since April 2007, panels have been asked to adhere to recruitment and interviewing guidance provided by the MPA. The MPA expects all panels to adhere to the MPA's equal opportunities policy, recruit new panel members from all sections of the community and actively foster good relations between people of different, faiths, races, genders, sexualities, abilities and age on the panel.

Recruiting volunteers to the Barking and Dagenham ICV panel has been a challenge. New supplies of posters and leaflets have been placed in libraries and community centres and the ICV role has been advertised on the council's intranet with limited success.

During the year one new volunteer was interviewed and recruited. It has proven difficult to recruit new members, particularly those aged below 40, however the panel has managed not to lose so many members that it has become ineffective nor witnessed performance dramatically affected.

The panel welcomes applications from all sections of the community in line with stated policy. It is hoped that future recruitment will result in an increased number younger people. New initiatives will be needed both to target different types of people and to increase the take up of the role.

# Visits to police stations

There are two custody suites in the borough at Barking and Dagenham; Barking does not operate full time however it is used for overflow purposes, when the main station is shut, or occasionally under Operation Safeguard.

The panel makes weekly, unannounced visits to Dagenham police station and to Barking when it is known the station is being used.

The majority of our reports have not raised any significant issues that required the attention of the MPA or which required a response from the local police. However, there have been a number issues that are frequently raised:

- Over the year concerns over the supply of blankets and toilet paper have had to be resolved.
- Panel members continue to be concerned over detainees' access to showers and washing facilities, especially immigration detainees who may have been in custody for several days.
- Issues in the FME room appear to be consistently raised, specifically problems with the clinical waste bin often requiring emptying lack of blue roll and doors being left unlocked on cupboards containing medical equipment and stock.
- A number of concerns about general and more acute areas of uncleanliness and untidiness of certain areas within custody.

Fortunately no significant issues have been raised in 2007 that have required intervention and ICVs have been well received and accommodated by Custody Staff.

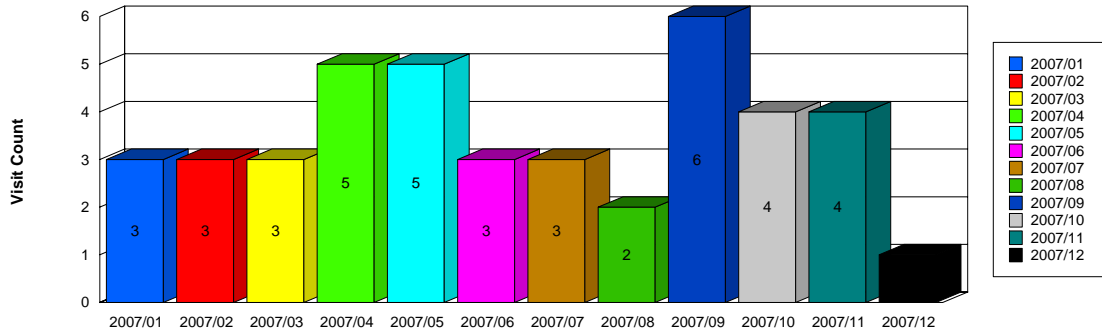


# Data from panel visits

## 1. Number of Visits

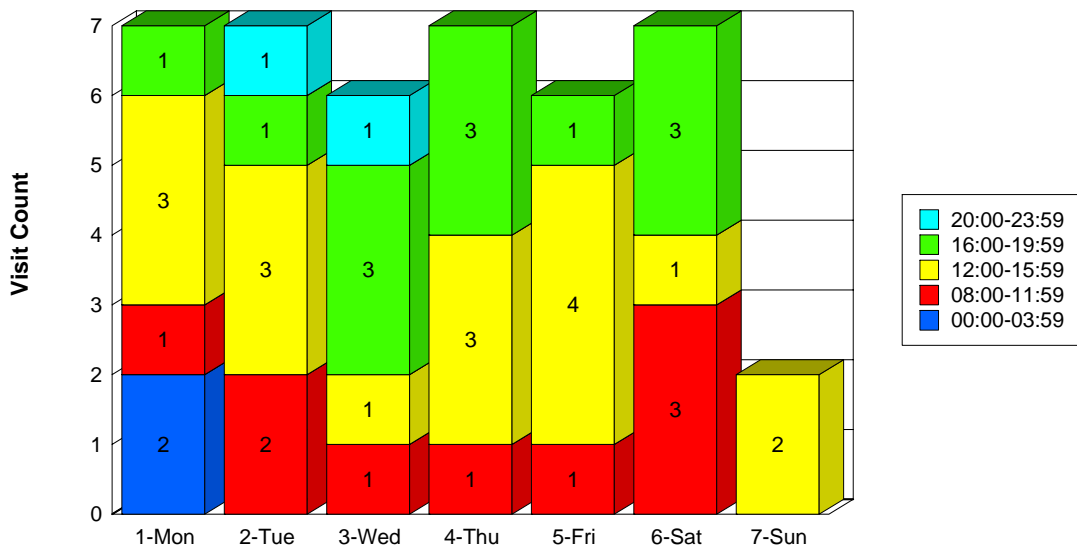
Station	Annual no. of visits	% of Annual Target*
Barking and Dagenham	42	81

\*Annual Target is 52 visits per 24/7-custody suite.



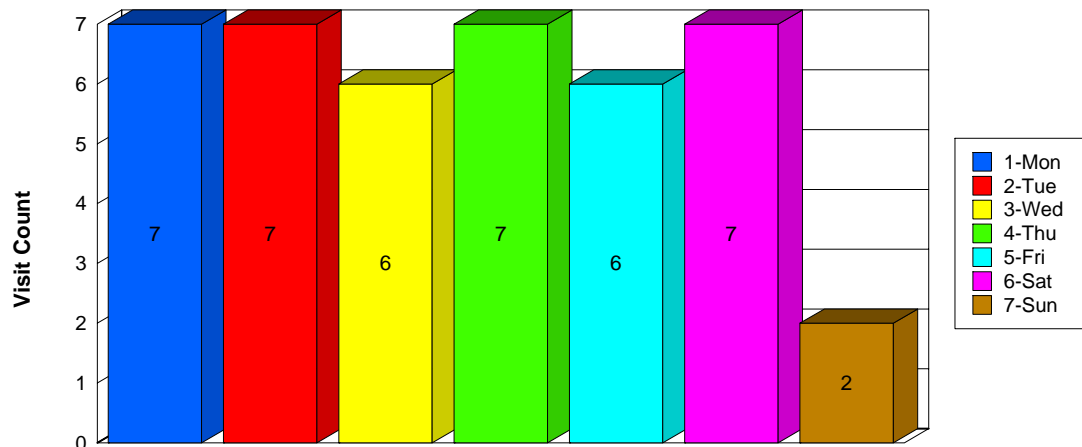
## 2. Time of Visits

Time Period	Annual no.	% of all visits
0000 – 0359 hrs	2	4.8
0400 – 0759 hrs	0	0
0800 – 1159 hrs	9	21.4
1200 – 1559 hrs	17	40.5
1600 – 1959 hrs	12	28.5
2000 – 2359 hrs	2	4.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>100</b>

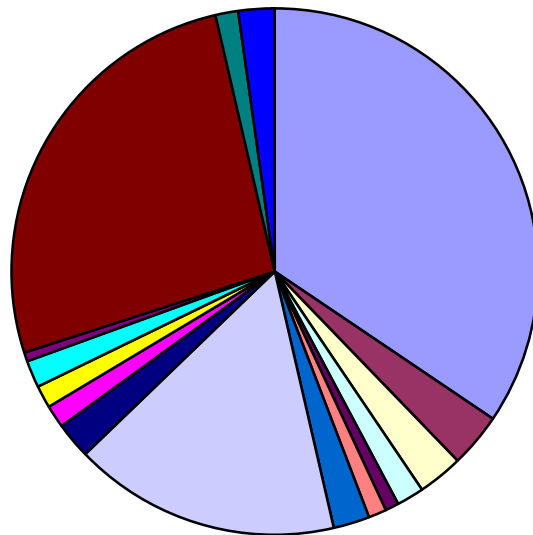


### 3. Days of Visits

Day	Annual no.	% of all visits
Monday	7	16.6
Tuesday	7	16.6
Wednesday	6	14.3
Thursday	7	16.6
Friday	6	14.3
Saturday	7	16.6
Sunday	2	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>100</b>



### 4. Details of detainees' concerns:



Light Blue	No complaints
Dark Red	Asleep/Requested Blanket
Yellow	Medical attention
Light Green	Consultation
Dark Purple	Legal Advice
Light Orange	Bail/Relative Informed of Detention
Blue	Immigration
Light Blue	In Interview
Dark Blue	Too hot/Too cold
Pink	Language Difficulties
Yellow	Out of Cell/Other
Cyan	Request Drink or Washing Facilities

# Plans for forthcoming year 2008

The Panel's aims and objectives for 2008 are as follows:

- To make a total of 52 visits to Dagenham custody suite and occasional visits to Barking when being used.
- To maintain the excellent distribution of visits across the week.
- To vary the times of visits in order to provide a better spread over 24 hours, particularly between the hours of 20:00-07:59.
- To maintain and improve upon the level of communication with Barking and Dagenham police, the custody manager during panel meetings and custody staff during visits
- To continue to ensure that the rights and interests of detainees are upheld. To raise concerns promptly and effectively with the local police or the MPA as appropriate and to challenge where appropriate
- To ensure that all new recruits receive local and MPA training and that existing members of the panel undertake refresher training at least once during their three-year tenure.
- Together with the MPA, to continue to promote and raise awareness of the work of Independent Custody Visitors.
- To attempt, through the application of an equal opportunities recruitment policy, to ensure that the panel reflects the diversity of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham across all strands.
- To investigate new initiatives designed to target different types of people and increase the take up of the ICV role