



MPA

Metropolitan Police Authority

Croydon Independent Custody Visiting panel

Annual Report 2007/08



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Introduction

Welcome to the annual report of the Croydon Independent Custody Visiting Panel.

The report relates to the area covered by the borough's Operational Command Unit. The two charging stations in the borough are Croydon and South Norwood Police Stations, both of which are visited weekly by the panel. This report covers the period 1st March 2007 to 31st March 2008.

The purpose of the report is to publish a record of the work of the panel and to highlight those issues of concern that have arisen during the past year.

Aims and achievements

Aims

The Croydon Independent Custody Visiting Panel holds the following aims:

- To ensure that the rights of people held in police detention are upheld and to promote greater public confidence in this being done. The scheme is designed to improve trust and co-operation between the police and the local community
- To continue to observe, comment on, and seek improvements to the conditions under which people are detained at police stations. Panel members raise issues observed during their visits in accordance with the ICV Code of Practice, and bring matters to the attention of senior officers of Croydon MPS
- To undertake ICV duties and responsibilities in accordance with the Metropolitan Police Authority London ICV handbook

Achievements

- The Croydon Panel has benefited from the MPA press recruitment campaign, resulting in a regular flow of new ICV applications.
- The panel recognises and promotes the need to reflect the borough's diversity amongst the panel membership. The panel will continue to recruit from all sections of the community that live, work or study in the borough.
- The panel has grown in number during the past year. The role of Vice Chair undertaken by Laura Scott-James has proved a great success in forming stronger leadership within the panel in supporting the Chair's role. This has been particularly noticeable in relation to training of new members. A special thanks to Laura for all her hard work within her first year of office.
- The panel members' attendance at meetings and the number of visits they complete has greatly improved. This has resulted in increased participation in meetings and greater shared feedback and discussion of issues arising from station visits. As Chair, Richard has encouraged this proactive approach which has developed and improved team spirit within the panel, also setting a good example to the newer members.

Chair's report

As ever I am indebted to the Panel members, Police and others who have done so much good work for custody visiting in Croydon over the preceding year.

The Croydon panel continues to make unannounced visits to the custody suites located at Croydon and South Norwood. These visits are made at varying times through the week, including Sundays and bank holidays. Throughout the year our visitors have almost always been admitted without delay. I am pleased to again report that we have had no fatalities or serious items to note regarding the detainees during the course of this year. This is a credit to, and a reflection of the care with which the borough police go about their task

However, as I review my time as chairman I am struck by the reoccurrence of problems over the years and the difficulty of achieving more than the basic visiting objectives, important though they are. In 2004 I reported to the MPA:

“During the year the custody suite at Croydon was out of service for almost seven weeks for refurbishment. It has to be said that this appears to have made little difference to the cells other than to provide disabled access. Certainly there has been no improvement in the overall quality of accommodation. This means that cells will continue to have poor temperature control and ventilation.”

Four years on, we can now add the over-heating in the interview rooms at South Norwood. At times the temperatures reach a wholly unacceptable level for detainees, police and the other agencies involved. In spite of frequent reports there has been little action other than reports and “noting” of concern. We have reached a point that action is now required, not words.

Since the change of administrative arrangements and their centralisation we as a panel have had no fewer than four co-ordinators. Most recently we have been fortunate to have Adela Wegrzynski return to Croydon and provide a most valuable service and give some continuity. However we want and need a permanent secretary. This will hopefully now be achieved with the appointment of Laura Del Nevo. We wish her a warm welcome.

Throughout the year the Panel has on the whole continued to enjoy a good working relationship with the police at both Croydon and South Norwood. This is testimony to the professionalism of panel members and the openness of the police. We are fortunate that the custody suite managers Michael Maynard and Steve Gollum both attend our meetings together with Inspector Foster.

In terms of personnel, during the year we finally lost Roma Patel. Following her university course she found it impossible to make the time available for panel visiting. We wish her well. However, largely through the indefatigable efforts of Adela we have been successful at finding and recruiting several valuable new members and we welcome the following new members to the Croydon Panel:-

Hassan Danjuma, Paul Berry, Michael Ginsbury, Samantha Mayne-Roque
Anthony Ogunnaike

The year ahead will no doubt present its own challenges. However, I am sure the panel will move forward and continue to perform for the benefit of all concerned in the custody process. Finally, I would like to thank once again all my fellow panel members and our hard working coordinators for all their efforts, without which none of the activity reported here would be possible.

Richard Billington – Croydon Chair

Membership and MPA Support

Throughout the year Croydon has received support from the MPA from Cindy Macrae (ICV Coordinator) and Adela Wegrzynski, (ICV Support Officer). A new MPA ICV Coordinator, Laura Del Nevo, has recently been appointed and will take over full responsibilities for Croydon, Lewisham, Bexley and Bromley panels.

MPA support to the panel has continued throughout the year in the form of:

- Maintaining communication across the London panels through publication and distribution of a newsletter to all London Independent Custody Visitors.
- Continuing a successful recruitment campaign that has helped to increase panel membership. Monitoring panel diversity and targeting recruitment where necessary.
- Providing an initial training program for all new members.
- Monitoring visiting statistics to measure panel performance, ensuring that all custody suites in London are regularly visited by ICVs.
- Inviting guest speakers for panel meetings (Westminster Drug Project worker in February 2008)
- Holding a London ICV Conference in April 08 at the Riverbank Park Plaza Hotel, Vauxhall. The conference summary was circulated to all in ICV newsletter.

The Panel has a current panel membership of 10 who currently consist of 6 men and 4 women. Further recruitment is still underway with an additional two vetting applications pending. As the panel covers two stations a full complement membership would ideally be 12 to 15 maximum.

Current membership:

Richard Billington -Chair
Laura Scott James –Vice Chair
Alan Froude
Mohammed Aslam
Julie Salmon
Lillian Magero
Hilary Cavagnoli
Danjuma Hassan
Anthony Ogunnaike
Paul Berry
Michael Ginsbury
Samantha Mayne-Roque

Roma Patel left the panel this year. The panel would like to thank her for her years of dedication and commitment.

Station Visits and MPS Statement

Station Visits

The panel has maintained its positive relationship with Croydon MPS and would like to thank all the representatives who regularly attend the panel meetings: Inspector Graham Foster and Custody Support Managers Steven Gollop and Michael Maynard. The panel would also like to make a special note of thanks to the many individual officers recognised and noted at panel meetings throughout the year for showing an exceptionally high standard of support to ICV members during their visits. The panel understands the importance of showing appreciation to these officers, and have been assured that our praise has been delivered to relevant officers, via the MPS representatives on the panel.

Issues raised throughout the year include:

- Feedback on the NSPIS computerised system, which is now established within the custody suite. ICV's recognise that the Croydon officers training program was not rolled out as quickly as previously expected and have made allowances for problems with the system during their visits.
- Delays or refusals to detainee requests to use washing facilities because of shortages of officers to oversee this practice.
- Serious concerns over high temperature in interview rooms at South Norwood. Matter now to be raised to MPA.
- Questioning of the position of a table in front of a panic strip in the Forensic Medical Examiner's (FME) room. The MPS panel representatives raised the issue with the Senior FME and the issue has now been resolved.
- Reoccurring problems throughout the year mainly to do with cleanliness and storage and some delayed access, which are normally dealt with effectively by the officers on duty

MPS Statement

On behalf of Chief Superintendent Gore and the custody staff of the Croydon Borough Police I would like to thank all of the Croydon ICVs for your valued input and support throughout the last 12 months.

It is appreciated that you give up your personal time to help provide reassurance to our communities that those arrested here are treated fairly and that they receive appropriate care. We look forward to working together with you in the coming months to maintain the excellent professional relationship that has been established.

I would like to thank Adela for her work and help as the MPA and wish her well in any future projects. Finally I will add my welcome to Laura as the new MPA coordinator and wish her success in this role.

Inspector Graham Foster

Data from station visits

Figures have been validated where possible but are subject to anomalies in report forms. E.g. missing info on visit report forms

1. Number of Visits

Station	No. of visits conducted
Croydon	44
South Norwood	37
Total	81

2. Visit times

Time slots	No. of visits conducted
0000 – 0359 hrs	
0400 – 0759 hrs	
0800 – 1159 hrs	15
1200 – 1559 hrs	28
1600 – 1959 hrs	31
2000 – 2359 hrs	6

3. Visits Days

Days	No. of visits conducted
Monday	8
Tuesday	7
Wednesday	13
Thursday	7
Friday	22
Saturday	8
Sunday	9

4. Visit duration

	No. of visits conducted
Less than 30 mins	15
30 – 60 mins	43
60 – 90 mins	11
90-120 mins	3
More than 120 mins	1

5. Visit and detainee details

Total number of detainees at time of visits	453
PACE detainees	312
Immigration detainees	33
Other	5
Detainees seen	208

Objectives for the coming year

- The Croydon ICV panel fully support the MPA's trial of a Self-Introduction Scheme. At present the scheme is undergoing a consultation program, part of which will include a series of pilot run projects. Croydon has submitted a request to take part in this pilot scheme.
- Members have expressed an interest in promoting their panel within the local borough community network. Members wish to invite a minimum of 5 speakers over the next year to give presentations on their work to the panel. Invitations could be forwarded to Drugs Worker's, Senior FME, Appropriate Adults, Neighbouring ICV panels, or other organisations with a common interest.
- The panel will continue to share good practice and improve relationship with Croydon Community Police Consultative Group (CCPCG).
- The panel aims to vary the times that visits are made to both police stations to minimise any predictability about their visiting. It is recognised that staffing levels and the business of the station varies depending on the day and time.
- The panel aims to continue undertake training for new members, by encouraging experienced members to become more actively involved in shadow training. Experienced members will make every effort to pass on their knowledge to new members through shadowed visits.
- The panel aims to continue to promote diversity within its panel membership