



MPA

Metropolitan Police Authority

Ealing Independent Custody Visiting Panel

Annual Report 2007



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Introduction

Welcome to the annual report of the Ealing Independent Custody Visiting Panel covering the calendar year January 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 panels activities and visits made
- 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 ensure that London's police service is accountable for the services it provides 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 Ealing, but is independent of the police. The MPA holds overall responsibility for the scheme's management and administration, providing a team of MPA staff to support the panels.

Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) 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 the ICV 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. The Ealing Custody Visiting Panel forms part of the London ICV Scheme. This new reporting arrangement brings Ealing in line with other parts of the London ICV Scheme.

Aims, achievements and developments

The aims and objectives of the panel are laid out in the Home Office Codes of Practice, the National Standards governing Independent Custody Visiting and 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. This is achieved by;

- Making a total of 104 visits. One visit per week to every 24/7 custody suite in the borough, endeavouring to vary the time of visits.
- Maintaining panel membership to ensure an equitable share of the visit workload.
- Ensuring members continue to learn from their experiences and contribute to building confidence between the police and the community in line with the original aims of the scheme.

Although the performance in terms of visit numbers may appear disappointing at 71% of scheduled visits completed this is mitigated by the low numbers of visitors for a large part of the year. For many months the panel had only 7 active visitors – the optimum number for a borough with 2 custody suites is 17!.

Visits have been reasonably well spread throughout the week, though visitors show a preference for visiting later in the week, especially on Sunday. Although 46% of visits were carried out on the evening, there was a very healthy distribution of visit times. A visit was made in every timeslot and the panel can be very satisfied that it provided a 'snapshot' of visiting conditions across all hours of the day. A very encouraging 83% of those in detention were either spoken to or visually checked during visits. 85% of detainees were held under PACE and the figure of 7% immigration matches the trend in many other London boroughs.

In the majority of cases, there were no significant issues raised. However, there are some recurring concerns including the number of detainees with suspected mental health issues and cleanliness in the suite. There is also the ongoing London wide issue of immigration detainees and the particular challenges this presents in terms of language and duration of detention.

Attendance at Ealing ICV panel meetings has occasionally been an issue but low membership numbers mean that the effect of one or two apologies can impact exponentially on meetings. The working relationship with new custody managers had something of a stuttering start but has developed into one that is both friendly and professional. Members are kept well informed by the custody managers on custody issues and wider police developments and are robust in raising concerns. Visit workload is reasonably well shared among members though toward the end of the year the burden fell increasingly on the chair to cover visits that other members were scheduled to make but had difficulties fulfilling. The panel is represented on the Ealing Police and Community Consultative Group. (EPCCG)

CHAIR'S REPORT

2007 saw many changes to the Ealing Custody Visitor's Panel.

- Jeannine André took on the role of Chair
- The MPA took over the administration of all London ICV Panels.
- James Tate was appointed our Panel coordinator.
- Keith Lunson was reassigned as Chief Inspector of Custody, and replaced by Chief Inspector Gwillim and Inspector Biln.
- The growth of the Panel.

The Panel during 2007 went from strength to strength.

Several new members were recruited from different backgrounds (see recruitment section for exact details). The new recruits and the original members have resulted in a very efficient Panel as all the different backgrounds and careers have brought a wealth of experience to the Panel. This positive working relationship has resulted in, during the latter part of 2007, all members doing their utmost to ensure that very few visits were missed

The positive attitude of Panel members has forged a very good working relationship with the custody sergeants and staff at Acton and Southall police stations. Very few reports of negative treatment by the police have been reported on visits reports.

The Panel has also, during 2007, built up a good working relationship with Inspector Biln and Chief Inspector Gwillim, who showed support for the efforts made by the members of the Panel and responded to all concerns. Chief Inspector Gwillim informed the Panel that in May 2008, Ealing police station would be reopened but would not be run by the police but a private company. However, custody visitors would be required to carry out visits when the station reopened.

2007 also saw the demise of the white boards at the police station and the implementation of a new computer system resulting in a paperless custody suite. The Panel attended a course and were trained on how the new system would affect our work. However, the new computer system brought other issues, such as a directive informing all custody sergeants to blot out the detainee's name, but all in all, the transition was smooth and with little or no problems to report on the part of the Panel.

Issues raised during 2007 with regard to detainees were to do with the length immigration detainees were kept in police and a concern at the growing number of youth being held in custody. There has also been concern over the cleanliness of Acton and Southall's stations, in particular the FME room and kitchen.

Lastly, the chair would like to thank all Panel members for their fantastic support over the past year. It has been hard work for everyone as with so few members it has meant that so few have been required to do so much.

Hopefully, we can keep up the good work in 2008.

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 races, genders, sexualities, abilities and age on the panel.

According to the London Development Agency, 2001 census figures showed Ealing to be the 4th most ethnically diverse borough in London with 55.1% of residents belonging to a minority ethnic group. 41.3% were of non-white origin and 31% were born outside of the EU compared to 6.8% nationally. The gender figures show 51% female and 49% male. Ealing is the London borough with the 2nd highest percentage of declared belief or religion with 50.7% Christian, 10.3% Muslim, 8.5% Sikh and 7.8% Hindu. 14.8% of people of working age are disabled.

The membership of the panel is healthily diverse in terms of age, gender and ethnicity, though is not precisely representative of the borough. It should be noted that specific records of the 6 common threads of diversity (age, gender, ethnicity, faith, sexual orientation and disability status) are not recorded. Application packs sent to potential new ICVs contain a diversity monitoring form but, as in all public bodies, disclosure of such information is voluntary.

The MPA requires visitors to make a minimum of 12 visits a year and, as visits are made in pairs, the optimum number of visitors on a panel is 9 for every 24/7 custody suite. The Ealing membership of 9 ICVs is well short of the optimum and although members have shown a commendable willingness to conduct visits in excess of the minimum required, it affords the panel little resilience to cover periods of unavailability. Local profile raising initiatives appear to induce a greater response than the ongoing London wide advertising that the MPA has implemented and a west London newspaper article issued in September producing encouraging results.

The need for further recruitment may well be exacerbated by the proposed re-opening of a custody suite at Ealing Police station though the exact nature of custody arrangements, and therefore the responsibility of the panel, is not yet clear.

Members of the Ealing ICV Panel

Jeannine Andre (Chair)

Kamoru John Atiko

Jacinta Bray

Teresa Dalmeda-Fisher

Anastasia Griffith

Stephen Gennari

Dilip Jethwa (Vice Chair)

Ashley McMahon

Lesley-Anne Williams

Members who resigned or retired in 2007

Manjit Kanver

Data from panel visits to police stations

Figures have been validated where possible but are subject to anomalies in report forms. Detainees are assumed to be PACE and assumed to be 'seen' where such info is missing..

1. Number of Visits

Station	No. of visits conducted
Acton	37
Southall	37
Total	74

2. Visit times

Time slots	No. of visits conducted
0000 – 0359 hrs	1
0400 – 0759 hrs	4
0800 – 1159 hrs	16
1200 – 1559 hrs	8
1600 – 1959 hrs	34
2000 – 2359 hrs	11
Total	74

3. Visits Days

Days	No. of visits conducted
Monday	2
Tuesday	5
Wednesday	8
Thursday	16
Friday	5
Saturday	13
Sunday	25
Total	74

4. Visit duration

	No. of visits conducted
Less than 30 mins	25
30 – 60 mins	35
60 – 90 mins	14
90-120 mins	0
More than 120 mins	0
Total	74

5. Visit and detainee details

	No.
Total number of detainees at time of visits	507
PACE detainees	435
Immigration detainees	37
Other	35
Detainees seen	421
Throughput of detainees in Ealing	11,482

Aims and plans for 2008

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

- To continue to ensure that the rights, entitlements and interests of detainees are upheld and to raise concerns promptly and effectively with local police or the MPA as appropriate.
- To make a total of 104 visits to the Ealing custody suite and any extra visits considered necessary as a result of special circumstances. To visit stations where Ealing detainees may be accommodated should the Ealing suites be closed.
- To vary the time of visits in order to provide a better spread and in particular to ensure that at least one visit is conducted at every time slot listed in the data section. (pp8)
- To continue to work with the local police to develop a better understanding of issues that affect detainees, custody staff and ICVs as well as the wider policing issues that affect the Ealing community
- To ensure that all new recruits receive local and MPA training. To continue to encourage learning through panel discussion and refresher training sessions.
- To increase engagement with other panels, through cluster meetings, the London ICV Conference and shared training and resources if appropriate.
- To attend and report to the Ealing CPCG as a means of informing the community of the panel's work and the conditions affecting those who find themselves in police custody in Ealing.
- Together with the MPA, to continue to promote and raise awareness of the work of Independent Custody Visitors.