



**MPA**

**Metropolitan Police Authority**

# Islington Independent Custody Visiting Panel

## Annual Report 2007



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# Introduction

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

The report covers a 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 Islington, 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 a standardised format has been introduced to facilitate a better understanding of the performance of the panels across London. This new reporting format brings Islington in line with other parts of the London ICV Scheme.

# Aims and Objectives

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:

**1. Continue to ensure follow up of ongoing issues raised in 2006/7 (e.g. cleaning and blankets, awareness of rights, provision of water and showers)**

- Liaise with local police;
- Lobby MPS and MPA for required resource (e.g. cleaning);
- Follow up ongoing issues raised with the MPA.

**2. Raise the frequency of Islington custody visits to 2 per week and improve the spread of visit timings in terms of day of week and time of day.**

- Use additional rota contingencies (e.g. a third visit planned once per month or 'stand by' ICVs each week);
- Introduce further controls via visit rotas as to visit timings.

**3. Strengthen membership of Islington ICVP to ensure at least 18 active custody visitors at any one time. This will enable increased visit frequency.**

- Display leaflets;
- Generate positive local press coverage;
- Explore opportunities for an Islington ICVP website;
- Attend planned careers fair in Summer 2007 if required.

**4. Increase the diversity of the membership in terms of age, ethnic background and experience.**

- Establish links with other community organisations and encourage local press coverage of the scheme.

**5. Explore opportunities to reduce the number of refused visits.**

- Monitor the percentage of rejected visits;
- Review the outcome of the trial in Portsmouth where ICVs introduced themselves to detainees.

**6. Increase awareness of the scheme within the local community**

- Gain coverage in the local press via AGM etc;
- Establish links with local community organisations.

**7. Ensure continued professional support for Islington ICVs.**

- Continue 6 weekly panel meeting process;
- Maintain briefing, interview and training process for new recruits;
- Implement probationary procedure (e.g. reviews as planned);
- Offer refresher training to all current ICVs by end 2007;
- Plan development day with guest speakers;
- Participate in meetings with other local panels.

# Chairman's report

This report for 2007 reflects the continuing and commendable contributions made by the volunteers from Islington panel. The past year has seen the panel mature and refine its purpose. Within the panel there is clarity of focus and the assurance that comes with the growing experience of our panel members. The stability in visitor's numbers, the increase in visits made and good attendance at meetings is pleasing to me as Chairman to see and report on.

Each of the achievements in this report will enable the panel to continue its role; representing the local community and checking on the welfare of people held in police custody.

This level of activity could not be maintained without the selfless support and commitment of the panel volunteers who give so generously of their time and talent. I would also like to commend the contributions made by panel co-ordinator Tony Hawker in fostering a good relationship between panel members, the MPS and MPA.

Spencer Pawson

Chair  
Islington Panel

# 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.

The membership of the Islington panel remained fairly constant. The MPA had a drive to recruit across the Metropolitan Police area and some boroughs proved easier than others. Consequently, there was a constant stream of people in the borough wishing to become ICVs. Not all of these translated into new members of the panel but the panel remained at about 14 strong.

The panel has been broadly representative of the borough as a whole. The borough has a fairly low proportion of White British residents (57%, compared to the city-wide average of 60%), but a higher proportion of residents drawn from all the White groups (75% against 71%). The ethnicity of the borough is broken down as follows: White British and Irish - 75%; Black / Black British - 12%; Asian / Asian British - 6%; Mixed - 4%; Chinese and Other - 3% (categories and data from census 2001).

We do operate an equal opportunities policy as far as recruitment is concerned and welcome applications from all sections of the community. We have been successful in the past year in recruiting younger members to the panel. We would hope to be successful in the future in recruiting from hitherto unrepresented ethnic minorities as well as increasing the number of men.

The Panel members during 2007 were:

Claire Brown  
Debbie Jamieson  
Helen Schofield  
Jackie Hall  
Jan Tucker  
Kerry Cox  
Laura Giuliani  
Lidia Erlichman (Vice Chair)  
Nick Collier

Niroo Swaffer  
Rachel Standing  
Ricardo Degli-Angeli  
Sharon Appleton  
Spencer Pawson (Chair)  
Tanisha Appleton  
Tola Akinde-Hummel  
Viv Duckett

# Visits to police stations

During 2007 the numbers of detainees held in Islington police custody facilities were as follows:

- Islington (Tolpuddle St) 10,222
  - Holloway 71
- Total 10,293

## Detainee concerns

There have been few major concerns voiced by detainees interviewed during 2007. Of all detainees who accepted a visit, 64% had no complaints about their treatment while detained. The four issues most reported to ICVs by detainees were: not receiving medical attention promptly from the FME service (8%); issues concerning legal advice or rights including telephone calls not having been received (8%); requests for or complaints about not being offered food and drink (4%); complaints about cold and/or lack of blankets (3%). The vast majority of these and other concerns raised by detainees were resolved to the satisfaction of the ICVs at the time of the visit.

## Matters requiring a Police response

The majority of matters requiring a police response to the panel (i.e. those listed on part 1 of the visit report form) concerned non-functioning or damage to elements of the infrastructure, equipment and furnishings. Cleanliness, hygiene and tidiness in the custody suite was also frequently of concern. After this, cold in the cells and the lack of clean blankets generated the most requests for responses.

The remainder included: procedures not being followed or rights being delayed; debris in cells and other risks to detainees identified. Responses concerning requests by detainees for food, drink and opportunities for washing were also sought by the panel.

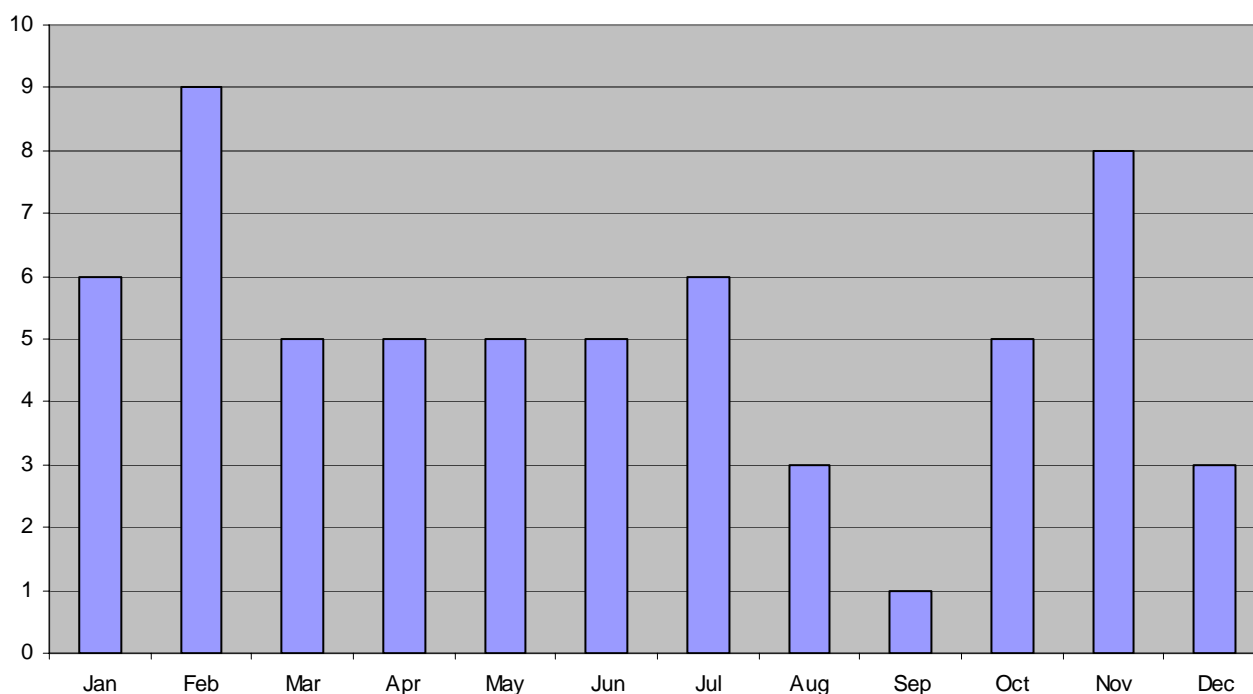
# Data from panel visits

## 1. Number of Visits (All Stations):

Station

Station	Annual no. of visits	% of annual target
Islington (Tolpuddle St)	60	-
Holloway	1	-
Total	61	117%

## 2. Breakdown by month of visits in London borough of Islington 2007:



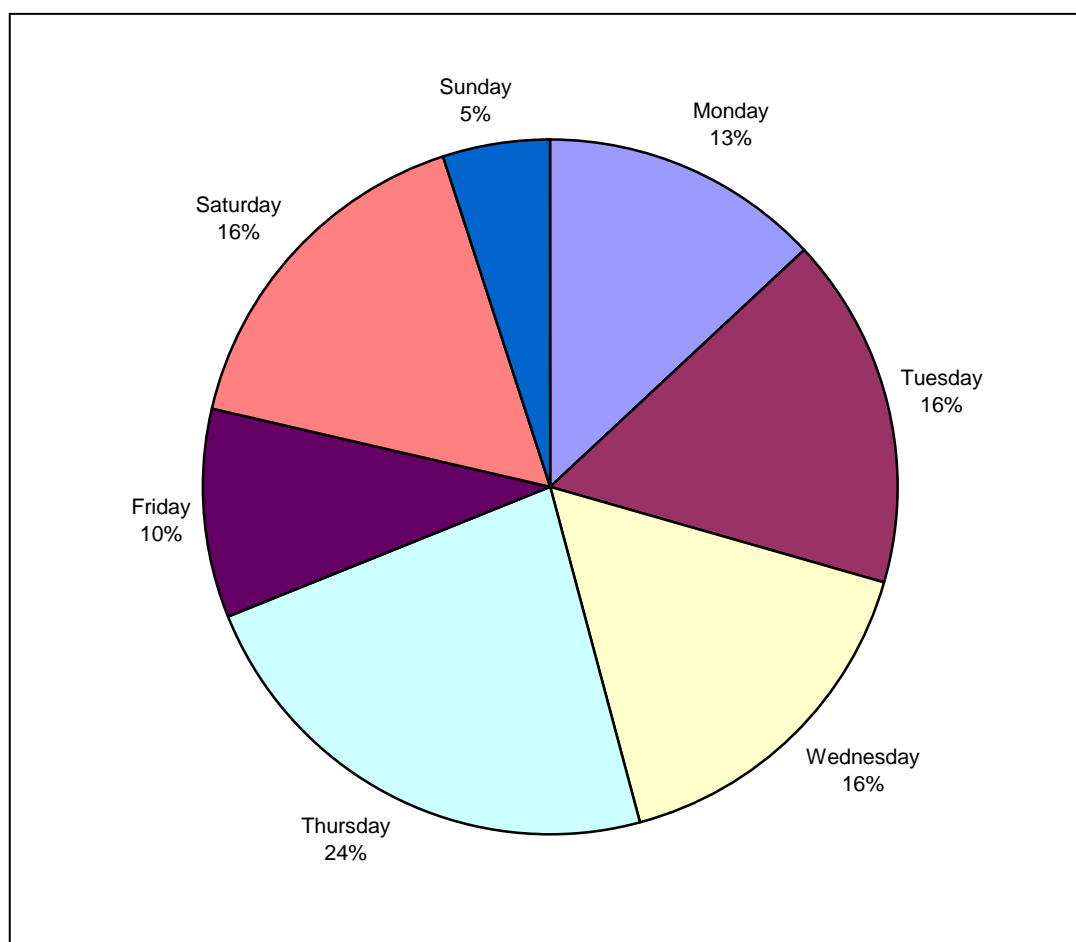
## 3. Time of Visits (MPS only)

Time range	Number of visits	%
00:01 – 03:00 hrs	0	-
03:01 – 06:00	0	-
06:01 – 09:00	0	-
09:01 – 12:00	16	26%
12:01 – 15:00	13	21%
15:01 – 18:00	12	20%
18:01 – 21:00	17	28%
21:01 – 00:00	3	5%
Total	61	-



#### 4. Days of Visits (MPS only)

	Annual no.	% of all visits
Sunday	5	5%
Monday	19	19%
Tuesday	18	18%
Wednesday	25	25%
Thursday	20	20%
Friday	9	9%
Saturday	6	6%
Total	102	-



#### 5. Details of Visits

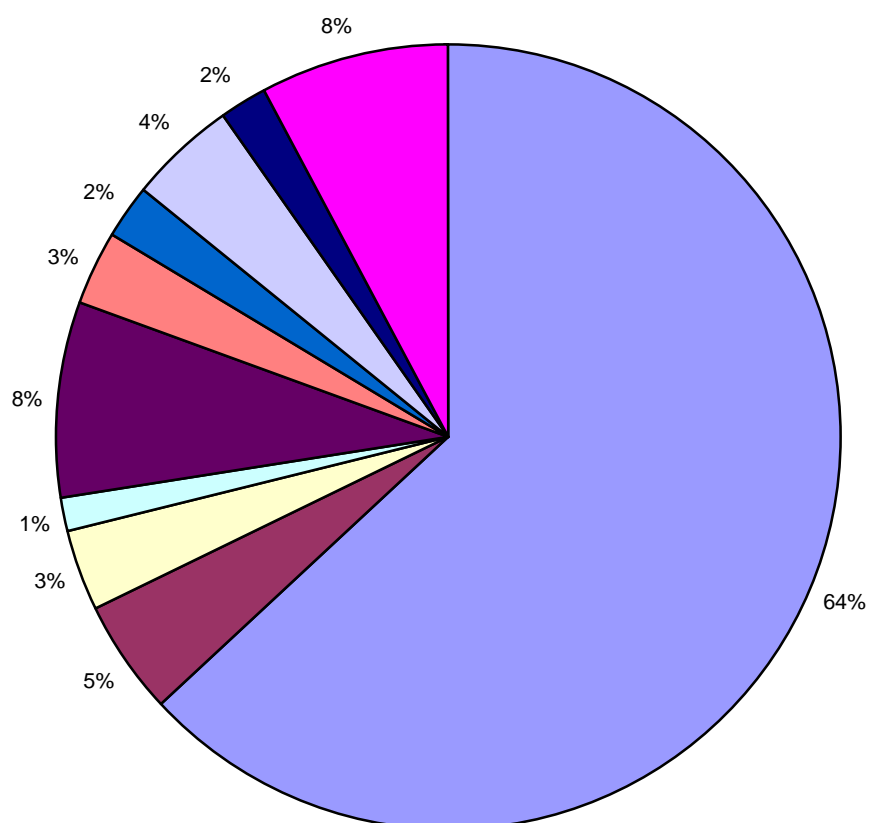
	No. DPs	% of Total
Total Number of people detained	10,293	-
Detainees held at time of visits	544	5.3%
Detainees offered a visit	362	3.5%
Detainees seen	247	2.4%
Detainees who refused to be seen	115	1.1%

## 6. Numbers of detainees by type during visits:

Total detainees held	544	-
Total number offered visits	362	66.5%

Detainee Type	Accepted	%	Declined	%
Pace detainees	225	62%	112	31%
Immigration detainees	16	4%	2	1%
Other	6	2%	1	0.3%
Total	247	68%	115	32%

## 7. Details of detainees concerns: Detainee concerns raised in Islington in 2007



No Complaints	Legal advice/Rights	Telephone call	Interpreter	Medical attention
Blanket/Cold	Cigarette	Food/drink	Hygiene issues	Other

**8. Details of issues raised during visits requiring a police response (matters listed on part 1 of the visit report forms).**

The majority of the panel's visit reports did not raise major issues that were not resolved at the time of the visit. Those issues that were recorded as 'requiring a police response' fell into the following general categories. (The incidences recorded were as one per report form rather than a total of individual occurrences mentioned over all report forms.)

- a. Problems reported concerned with the infrastructure and furnishings in the custody suites. These were wide ranging, including: graffiti, damage to plaster in cells, faulty plumbing, non-operational entry phones and damaged mattresses
- b. General tidiness and cleanliness in the custody areas – cells and rooms.
- c. Custody Officers mentioned
- d. Matters relating to FME service. These included both the service provided by FMEs – their attendance times etc – and also the condition of FME facilities and equipment.
- e. Temperature in the custody areas/cells and availability of blankets.
- f. Debris seen in the cells such as articles of clothing and old food containers
- g. Risks to detainees/staff identified both specifically and generally
- h. Problems with the use of NSPIS
- i. Procedural issues such as periodic checks not being maintained and issues concerning detainee rights and entitlements such as notifying relatives of detention, requests for food, drink and opportunities for washing.

	MPS
Infrastructure/furnishings/fitings	19
Cleaning, tidiness and general hygiene	15
Individual Officer mentioned	1
FME Service and FME room	5
Temperature and availability of blankets	13
Debris in cells	9
Detainee rights – delays/procedures not followed etc	15
Periodic checks (15, 30 minute etc) not maintained	1
NSPIS	1
Risks identified	2
Requests for food & drink	4
Personal hygiene – requests for washing facilities	1
Other	3

# Plans for forthcoming year 2008

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

- To make a total of not less than 156 visits to the two custody suites in the borough, and visit overflow sites where necessary.
- To continue to vary the day and time of visits in order to provide a better spread. Spread visits evenly over the days of the week and in particular to ensure that a minimum of 10% of visits are carried out between 20:00 and 04:00.
- To continue to ensure that the rights and interests of detainees are upheld and to raise concerns promptly and effectively with local police or the MPA as 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 age, gender and ethnic diversity of the Borough of Islington.