



MPA

Metropolitan Police Authority

Kensington & Chelsea Independent Custody Visiting Panel

Annual Report 2007



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Introduction

Welcome to the Annual Report of the Kensington & Chelsea Custody Visiting Panel. The report covers a period from 1st January 2007 to 31st 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

Independent Custody Visitors

Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) are volunteers from within the community who visit police stations unannounced to check on the rights, entitlements and conditions of detention of people held in police custody. Independent 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.

History of Independent Custody Visiting

The Independent Custody Visitors scheme, formally known as the Lay Visitors' scheme was introduced in the mid-1980s following a recommendation into Lord Scarman's report into the 1981 Brixton riots. Since then panels have evolved throughout the United Kingdom as an important means of securing accountability of the police to the local communities they serve, bringing police and communities closer together and enhancing public perception of police procedures and practices. It is now mandatory for each Police Authority in the country to have a Custody Visiting Scheme in place.

Visits to police stations

The Kensington & Chelsea Independent Custody Visitors make unannounced visits to the Borough's three police stations. Visits are always made in pairs. Visitors normally carry out one visit a month on a rota basis. Visits can be made at any time of the day or night, and on any day of the week. All detainees are offered the opportunity to speak to the ICVs but may choose not to. ICVs speak to the detainees and check if they have been informed of their rights and entitlements. ICVs also comment on the condition of the custody suite including the cleanliness of the cells. ICVs do not take sides but look, listen and report on what they find in the custody unit. Before leaving the custody area ICVs compile a report on their findings that will draw attention to any matters that may need addressing. A copy is also provided to the Police. Minor issues can usually be dealt with before ICVs leave the station by speaking with Custody Staff.

Panel Meetings

The Kensington & Chelsea panel has monthly meetings that are held at Kensington Town Hall. At the meeting ICVs discuss issues that have been raised on the visit report and a response is provided by the police representative of the station visited. Some issues may need persistence by the panel in monitoring and calling for action. The meeting also provides an opportunity for members to share their experiences on visits and be updated on criminal justice issues.

London Independent Custody Visiting Scheme

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. Prior to this, panels have been administered at borough level.

The scheme has the full support and cooperation of the Commissioner and the Borough Commander for Kensington & Chelsea, 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. There are 32 ICV Panels in London, one in each borough, except for Westminster which has two.

How to Apply

To be eligible to become an Independent Custody Visitor in the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea you must:

- Either live, work or study in the borough
- Be aged over 18
- Have no direct involvement in the criminal justice system, for example, serving police officers or special constables.
- For vetting purposes you must have resided in the UK for the last 3 years.

Appointment as an independent custody visitor is subject to successful security vetting clearance by the MPS Vetting Department.

Independent Custody Visitors are appointed by the Metropolitan Police Authority and accredited to the panel. The MPA provides new ICVs with initial training. All new panel members are paired with more experienced members of the panel until they have successfully completed a six month probationary period.

For more information about the London ICV scheme please contact:

ICV Coordinator
Metropolitan Police Authority
FREEPOST
LON17808
LONDON
SW1H 0DY

Freephone: 0808 100 1036 Minicom: 020 7202 0173
Email: icvrecruitment@mpa.gov.uk

Aims and achievements

Aims and Achievements

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

The primary objective of the panel is to check and report on the treatment of detainees in custody and to ensure their rights and entitlements are being observed. This is achieved by:

- Making one visit per week to the operational custody suites
- Holding monthly panel meetings and
- Increasing public awareness of the London ICV Visiting Scheme.

Visiting targets

As a result of declined membership in 2007 the panel was unable to achieve its visiting target of one visit per week, but have carried out as many visits as possible. One of the objectives set last year for 2007 was to increase weekend and night visits and reduce missed visits. The panel achieved its aim of undertaking a late night visit at 11:30pm.

Monitoring of detainees

The panel continued to monitor the conditions and times for which immigration detainees are held and pressed for improved conditions for these detainees

Police representation

During the year the panel maintained ongoing dialogue with the police, with regular attendance by the custody manager, Inspector Whitfield, at panel meetings, to provide responses to queries raised from visits and updates on custody matters.

Publicity

Panel members, the council administrators and MPA staff undertook various recruitment initiatives to raise public awareness of the scheme and to recruit new members. Leaflets and posters were sent to the libraries and voluntary organisations in the borough. Several applications were received following this. An advert was also placed in the Royal Borough Newspaper and the Kensington news.

Training

Two new members attended the initial training organised by the MPA and an experienced member attended the refresher training.

Management of the Scheme

On 2nd April 2007 the MPA implemented a centralised management of the scheme, replacing the Kensington & Chelsea council administrators with an MPA employed Coordinator, Jennifer Ankrah.

ICVs in London were issued with a London ICV Handbook; this document contains information about the governance arrangements together with guidance on custody visiting and copies of relevant MPA policies. ICVs were also expected to sign a Memorandum Understanding setting out the objectives, roles and responsibilities of the scheme and the role and responsibilities of Independent Custody Visitors.

Change of Borough Commander

In December 2007, the Borough Commander, Chief Superintendent Dominic Clout was posted to the Borough of Camden. Chief Superintendent Mark Heath, the Borough Commander for Camden was posted to the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea.

Membership, Recruitment & Training

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.

Application packs sent to potential new ICVs contain a diversity monitoring form but, as in all public bodies, disclosure of such information is voluntary.

Membership & Recruitment

2007 was a challenging year with the panel undergoing a great deal of change and a decline in membership. During the course of the year, eleven members left the panel due to factors such as changes in personal circumstances and concerns over the new administration arrangements of the scheme.

As a result of declined membership the MPA requested for neighbouring panels to support the Kensington & Chelsea panel with visits until additional members are recruited. The panel was assisted with visits from Liz Carboni and Mandy Hermitage, experienced visitors from Wandsworth panel, and Allison Davies, an experienced visitor from Lewisham ICV panel .

The following persons were members of the Panel during 2007:

Simon Addinsell (Chair), Robert Birmingham, Ben Braithwaite, David Brown, David de Haas, Pepe Francis, Caryl Harris, Rickard Jonsson, Sophie-Louise Koole, Farri Mizani, Jackie Nield (Joint Vice Chair), Jill Powell, Sarah Sassoon (Joint Vice Chair), Vassiliki Stavrou, Arnold Stevenson, Sebastian Salama.

The following members left the panel during 2007:

Simon Addinsell (Chair), David Brown, David de Haas, Caryl Harris, Sophie-Louise Koole, Farri Mizani, Jackie Nield (Joint Vice Chair), Jill Powell, Sarah Sassoon (Joint Vice Chair) , Arnold Stevenson and Sebastian Salama.

An Annual General Meeting was not held in 2007, however, at the end of the year Rickard Jonsson & Ben Braithwaite agreed to take on the role of Joint Acting Chairs.

Training

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. During the year, new panel members attended the initial training sessions organised by the MPA. Refresher training was also organised for experienced panel members.

Acknowledgements

Despite the shortfall in membership towards the end of the year, the panel continued to carry out excellent work. Thanks are expressed to the following people:

- Simon Addinsell, the Chair, for his hard work, dedication and contribution to Independent Custody Visiting and the local community as well as Sarah Sassoon and Jackie Nield, Joint Vice-Chairs
- All members of the Kensington & Chelsea panel, past and present, for their hard work, diligence and commitment.
- Mandy Hermitage, Liz Carboni and Allison Davies for assisting the panel
- Previous successive administrators, Cecelia Hooley, Chris Glennie and Amer Taie for their efficient and professional service.
- Thanks also to Inspector Whitfield for his help, support and assistance and the Borough Commander Chief Superintendent Dominic Clout

Visits to police stations

The panel visits three custody suites in the Kensington & Chelsea borough; Chelsea, Notting Hill and Kensington, which is used as an overflow station. Chelsea custody suite is the busiest of the borough's three police stations.

General conditions of detention

The panel noted problems with the cell toilets not flushing on occasions. The panel also raised issues regarding the general standard of cleaning. Issues around cleaning and blanket have always been major concerns raised by ICVs in most of the London boroughs. All three stations had a deep clean (scrub clean) under the new cleaning contract but had not been steam cleaned.

In May 2007, the MPS Property Services department implemented a new cleaning contract. The key standards of the new cleaning contract were sent to all ICV panels to raise their awareness and also to refer to during their visits.

The panel will continue to monitor the general standards of cleaning and conditions of detention and it is hoped that these would improve.

Detainee treatment and entitlements

No significant matters have arisen. The main issues raised by ICVs following their visits were regarding immigration detainees;

Immigration Detainees

Visitors noted that there appeared to be an increase in the number and length of stay of immigration detainees. The panel suggested that custody officers should make detainees aware of the shower facilities available, especially the detainees that are due to appear in court the following morning. (Detainees are entitled to a wash not a shower, also, not all the stations have showers, but where they do, they are used when officers have the capacity to arrange it). The panel and the MPA will continue to monitor the trend in the detention of immigration detainees.

Operation Safeguard

Kensington station was used for operation safeguard. Operation Safeguard is the arrangement by the Home Office and the MPS to utilise police cells to accommodate Home Office prisoners when prison service accommodation has reached its operational capacity. Prisoners are housed in police cells for one night except for weekends, where the prisoner will be housed from Friday night until Monday morning. During the course of the year, there were a total of 34 Safeguard detainees in custody at the time of ICV visits. There were no concerns raised by the detainees seen by ICVs.

Notting Hill Carnival

As per usual arrangements, Notting Hill station was closed and Kensington station open during the Notting Hill Carnival weekend in August. Kensington custody dealt with arrests from the Carnival and then was used for bail to return.

Data from panel visits to police stations

Figures have been validated where possible but are subject to anomalies in report forms.

1. Number of Visits

Station	No. of visits conducted	% annual target
Chelsea	29	55.76
Notting Hill	32	61.53
Kensington (Target-one visit per week)	27	225
Total	88	Average Chelsea & Notting Hill: 58.64% Chelsea, Notting Hill, & Kensington: 114%

2. Visit times

Time slots	Chelsea	Notting Hill	Kensington
0000 – 0359 hrs			
0400 – 0759 hrs	1		
0800 – 1159 hrs	4	10	7
1200 – 1559 hrs	8	12	9
1600 – 1959 hrs	16	8	10
2000 – 2359 hrs		2	1
Total			

3. Visits Days

	Chelsea	Notting Hill	Kensington
Monday	3	3	8
Tuesday	3	6	5
Wednesday	3	7	6
Thursday	7	9	3
Friday	4	4	3
Saturday	5		1
Sunday	3	3	1

4. Visit duration

	Chelsea	Notting Hill	Kensington
Less than 30 mins	6	17	25
30 – 60 mins	21	15	2
60 – 90 mins	2		
90-120 mins			
More than 120 mins			

5. Visits and categories of detainees seen

	Chelsea	Notting Hill	Kensington	Total
Total No. of detainees at time of visits	121	77	38	236
Detainees spoken to	83	45	34	162
PACE detainees in custody	101	61	2	
Immigration detainees in custody	13	7		
Other	2			
Bail Act (pending court)				
Operation Safeguard			34	
Lock Out			2	

Targets & Plans for Forthcoming Year 2008

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

- To continue to ensure that the rights and interests of detainees are upheld and to raise concerns promptly and effectively with the local police or the MPA as appropriate.
- To increase the membership of the panel
- To increase the frequency of visits to weekly visits to each of the 24/7 custody suites
- Together with the MPA, to continue to promote and raise awareness of the work of Independent Custody Visitors in Kensington & Chelsea