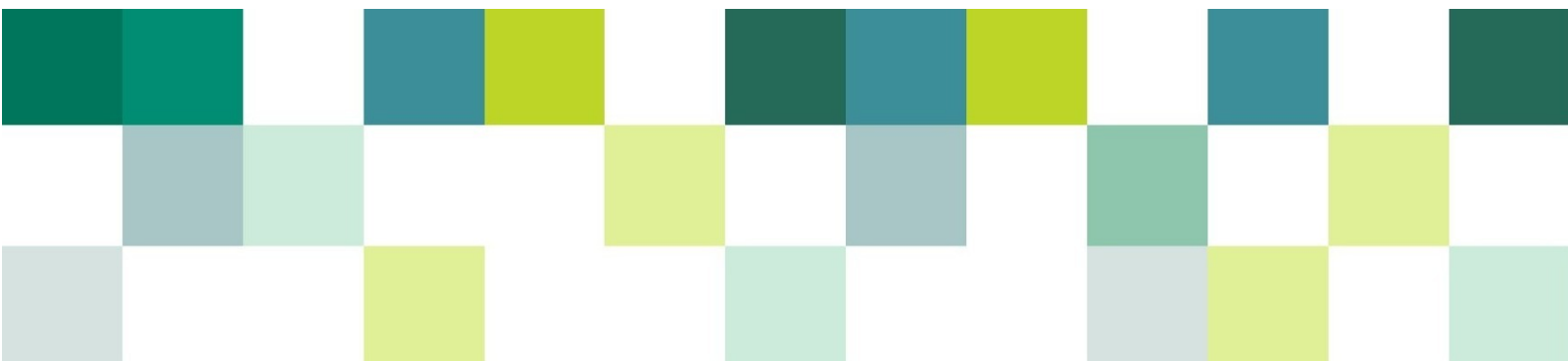


Hackney Independent Custody Visiting Panel

Annual Report 2008



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Introduction

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

The report covers the period from January 2008 to December 2008

The purpose of this 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 2009.

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 Commanders, 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.

Chair's Report

The past year has been a very successful one for Hackney's Independent Custody Visiting Panel and has witnessed its transition from a small panel administered in Tower Hamlets to a fully-fledged and operational Panel based in Hackney.

The Panel has now grown to 15 accredited members that reflect Hackney's diverse population. All but one ICVs have attended their formal training, and several members have also attended additional Chairs and Diversity training. Christina Jordean attended the annual ICVA conference in Stratford in October and a number of Panel members networked at the MPA's December Social event at The Empress State Building. Panel members continue to represent Hackney at the ICV Chairs Meetings and Hackney Custody User Group meetings. I would like to thank all the members of the Hackney Panel for volunteering so much of their time and providing so much expertise and support over the last year.

A constructive working relationship has been forged between the Panel and Hackney's Custody Manager, firstly Inspector Martin Davis and latterly Inspector Caroline Saunders, and we look forward to developing this further.

As a result of this, and our regular programme of visits to Stoke Newington and Shoreditch Custody Suites, we are beginning to see real improvements in the way detainees are treated whilst in police detention. However, we are not complacent. Access to non-urgent medical treatment can take too long, and the lack of interpreters often delays the timely processing of detainees. We would like to see detainees offered better access to washing facilities and showers, particularly if they are held overnight. We are still perturbed to see immigration detainees being held for periods of up to five days in Hackney's police cells, a purpose for which they were not designed and are entirely unsuited. We will continue to press for change and improvements in all these areas.

We have been continuously and ably supported in our work by Tony Hawker from the Metropolitan Police Authority, who has played a key role in facilitating the work of the Panel and coordinating a very successful ongoing recruitment campaign. Thanks are also due to Peter Tihanyi and his colleagues on the Tower Hamlets ICV Panel, who have been unstintingly generous with their time and support as we have 'found our feet'.

Overall it has been a successful year, and we look forward to building on this throughout 2009 to ensure that detainees are afforded the treatment and respect to which they are all entitled.

John Dixon
Chair

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.

The Hackney panel are required to make weekly unannounced visits to Stoke Newington and Shoreditch.

Because the panel had not been an independently functioning entity prior to June 2008 the panel's objectives were assumed rather than stated in an Annual Report. Its objectives were generic and followed Tower Hamlets lead for 2008 and were broadly as follows:

- To make a total of 52 visits over the year at a rate of 1 visit per week to both the boroughs stations – Stoke Newington and Shoreditch.
- To endeavour to distribute visits evenly across the week.
- To endeavour to achieve a reasonable distribution of the times of visits
- To build the panel membership to a minimum of 17 volunteers
- To maintain and improve upon the level of communication with Hackney 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 Hackney.

The panel made a total of 94 visits throughout 2008 to Hackney police stations. Against a target of 104 visits to be carried out during the year at a rate of one visit per week to each station, this represents an achievement of 90% of the annual target.

Recruitment and Retention

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.

Hackney Panel was supported by the Tower Hamlets panel in the structure of their meetings and by Tower Hamlets members on visits to the Hackney stations. At the beginning of 2008 the Hackney panel was at about a quarter strength only but as the year wore on the panel benefitted from a focussed and determined recruitment campaign. By the year's end the panel had 15 accredited members and was (from July 2008) holding its own meetings and interviewing prospective candidates at the Hackney Town Hall.

Recent diversity monitoring has been undertaken giving the opportunity of comparing each of the London panels against the diversity of their boroughs. However, because the monitoring is only complete for two thirds of the Hackney panel it is not possible to give an accurate statistical picture on ethnicity and how the panel compares with the borough profile. The only information that can be given is on age and gender. The population of the borough as a whole is 50% male, 50% female; Hackney ICV Panel has 5 male members and 10 female members so the panel does not accurately represent the borough in terms of gender. There is a reasonably even spread of ages with no ICVs in the oldest age categories*. The panel endeavours to be broadly representative of Hackney and has in 2008 had some success in beginning to match the borough profile.

The following Hackney members undertook visits for the panel during 2008.

John Dixon, Chair
Shabnum Hassan
Mohammed Hafesji
Steven Oram
Niahra Allen
Mary Pimm
Carolyn Hillery
Ibrahim Incedal
Melanie Norton
Christina Jordean
Samantha Bryant
Alison Murdoch
Cleopatra Palmer
Osaro Aiyeola

Tower Hamlets members who visited with the Hackney Panel during 2008:

Peter Tihanyi
Madeleine Craggs
Suzette Barry
Jane Fothergill
Amjad Rahi
Christine Reid
Zena Farah
Jai Joshi

Resigned during 2008

Keith Magnum – last visit 29/04/08
Jill Low – last visit 29/07/08

*based on projections derived from the 2001 census calculated by DMAG - the Data Management and Analysis Group - based at the Greater London Authority (GLA). These data comparisons are confined to apparent strands of diversity only.

Visits to Police Stations

There are two 24/7 custody suites in the borough of Hackney; the panel makes weekly, unannounced visits to Stoke Newington and Shoreditch stations.

Detainee Concerns

Of the detainees who were asked if they wished to speak to Hackney ICVs, 159 refused the visit. Of those who accepted (408), 192 had no complaints at all. Of those who had concerns regarding their rights, 29 were regarding requests for legal advice, 18 detainees wanted a relative informed of their detention and 23 needed the services of an interpreter. 24 detainees required medical attention. The remainder were requests for food and drink (15) and washing/toilet facilities (10). Most detainee concerns were resolved by the visiting ICVs at the time of the visit.

Matters requiring a police response

The majority of the visit report forms did not have any matters requiring a police response. Those that did fell into the following categories:

- Legal, detainees not receiving their rights such as access to a solicitor or having somebody informed of their detention
- Detainees held for long periods of time
- Problems with the FME service, detainees claiming to have not received timely medical attention. The FME room being untidy and unlocked.
- Officers not understanding the role of ICVs. Officers being unable to obtain the necessary printouts from NSPIS for ICV use. Poor record keeping on NSPIS by some officers.
- Communication difficulties and the use of interpreters with detainees for whom English is not their first language.
- Access to showers and washing facilities.
- Delay with detainees receiving food and drink
- General problems in the custody suite such as tidiness, hygiene and supply of blankets for detainees.

There were no significant concerns raised during the year that have not been addressed and dealt with either during a custody visit or through the monthly panel meetings.

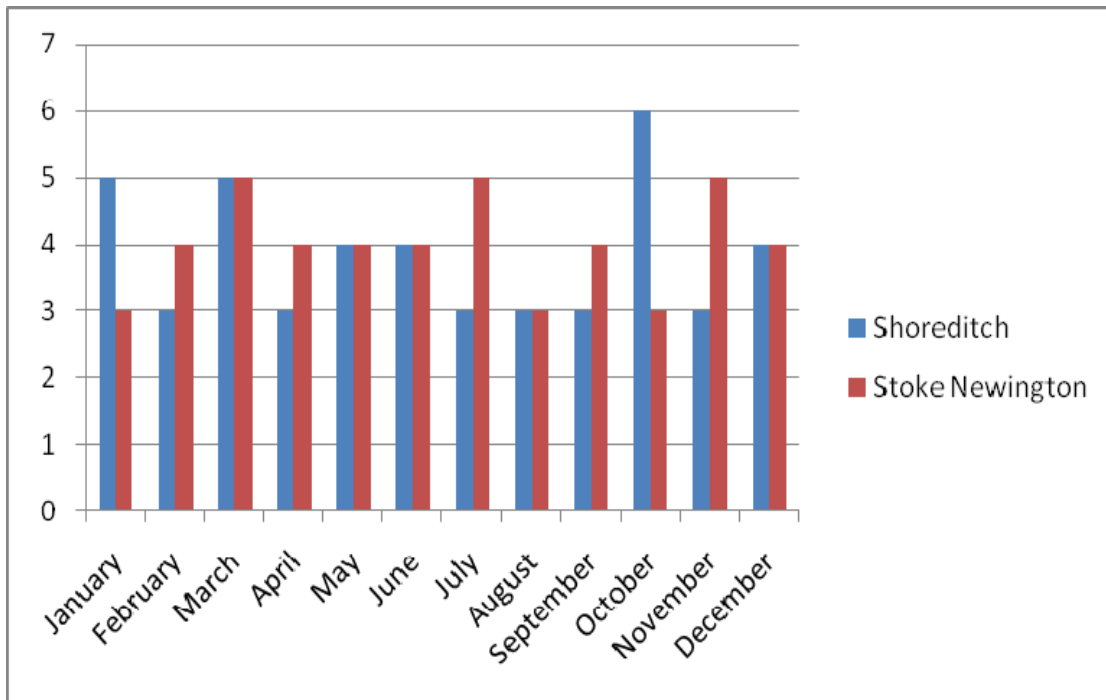
The relationship with custody staff has continued to be positive and panel meetings have been well attended by the Custody Manager.

Data from Panel Visits

1. Number of Visits

Station	Annual no. of visits	% of Annual Target*
Stoke Newington	48	92%
Shoreditch	46	88%
Total	94	90%

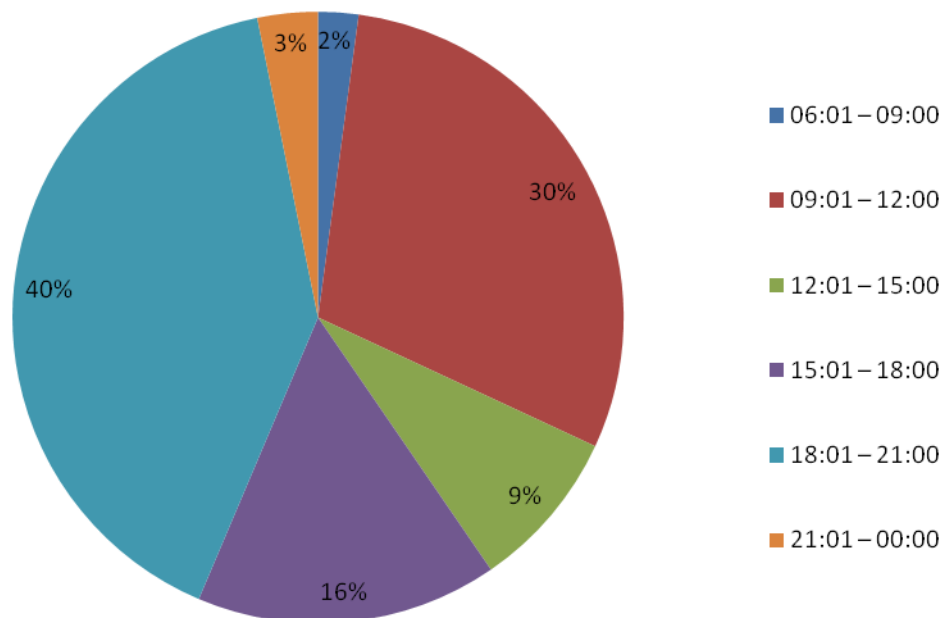
*Annual Target is 52 visits per 24/7-custody suite.



2. Time of Visits

Time range	Number of visits	%
00:01 – 03:00 hrs	0	-
03:01 – 06:00	0	-
06:01 – 09:00	2	2%
09:01 – 12:00	28	30%
12:01 – 15:00	8	9%
15:01 – 18:00	15	16%
18:01 – 21:00	38	40%
21:01 – 00:00	3	3%
Total	94	-

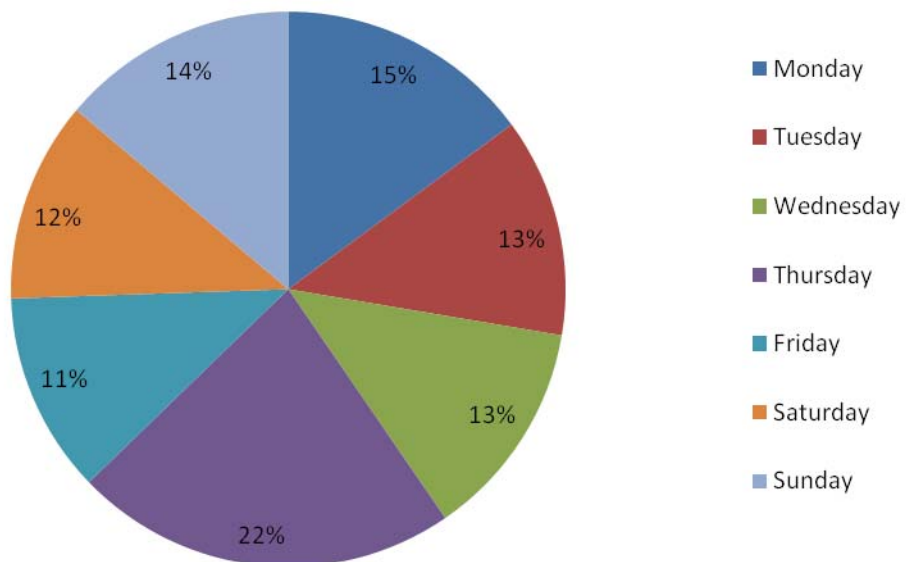
Number of visits by Time Range



3. Days of Visits

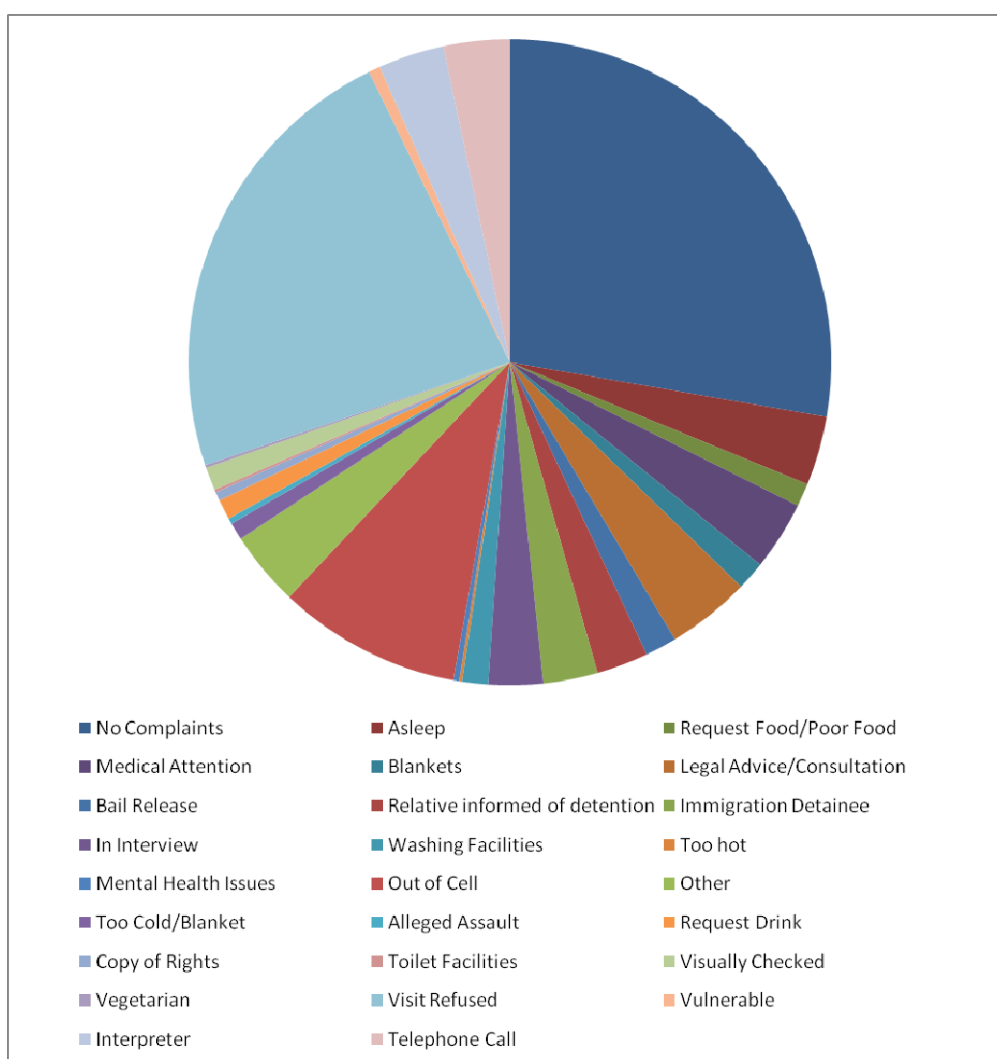
Day	No. of visits	%
Monday	14	15%
Tuesday	12	13%
Wednesday	12	13%
Thursday	21	22%
Friday	11	11%
Saturday	11	12%
Sunday	13	14%
Total	94	

Spread of Visits by Day



4. Details of detainees' concerns:

No Complaints	192	Out of Cell	64
Asleep	24	Other	26
Request Food/Poor Food	8	Too Cold/Blanket	6
Medical Attention	24	Alleged Assault	2
Blankets	10	Request Drink	7
Legal Advice/Consultation	29	Copy of Rights	3
Bail Release	11	Toilet Facilities	1
Relative informed of detention	18	Visually Checked	8
Immigration Detainee	19	Vegetarian	1
In Interview	19	Visit Refused	159
Washing Facilities	9	Vulnerable	4
Too hot	1	Interpreter	23
Mental Health Issues	2	Telephone Call	23



Plans for Forthcoming Year 2009

Aims & Objectives

- To make a total of 52 visits over the year at a rate of 1 visit per week to both Stoke Newington and Shoreditch Police Stations.
- To maintain the even distribution of visits across the week.
- To achieve a more even distribution of the times of visits across the 24 hour period, to include occasional visits between 21:00 & 24:00 and between 06:00 & 09:00.
- To build and maintain panel membership at a minimum of 17 volunteers.
- To maintain and improve upon the level of communication with Hackney police, the custody manager during panel meetings, custody staff during visits, other Hackney custody users and other ICV panels.
- 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.
- To run a brief series of short (1-2 hour) refresher training courses for the Hackney Panel.
- 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 Hackney across all strands.
- To investigate new initiatives designed to target different types of people and increase the take up of the ICV role.