



MPA

Metropolitan Police Authority

Hillingdon Independent Custody Visiting Panel

Annual Report 2008



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Introduction

Welcome to the 20th annual report of the Hillingdon Independent Custody Visiting Panel covering the period from January to December 2008.

The purpose of the report is to:

- Evaluate the panel's performance
- Provide the local community and the MPA with information about the panel's activities and visits made
- 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 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 Hillingdon, 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 Hillingdon Custody Visiting Panel forms part 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 unlikely to change from one year to the next and is achieved by;

- Making a total of 156 visits per year. One visit per week to both of the borough 24/7 custody suites and the custody suite at Heathrow, 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.

Visits are well spread throughout weekdays with an increase in weekend visits to almost 10% of the total. There is a reasonable spread in terms of the time-slots of visits although very early morning or late night visits are rare. Despite fewer members the panel conducted more visits last year than in 2007, conducting 95% of scheduled visits. A very encouraging 63% of those in detention were spoken to. Of the remaining detainees who weren't unavailable by being out of the cell, all were visually checked during visits. 90% of detainees were held under PACE, just under 7% were immigration and just over 3% 'other'.

In the majority of cases, there were no significant issues raised and the panel meetings in the latter part of the year highlighted no detainee concerns at all. The very few detainee concerns raised have, as reported by the panel, been responded to promptly, appropriately and professionally by custody staff. The number of detainees who accept visits continues to suggest that the verbal introduction of visitors is such that it encourages detainees to engage during a visit. Other than detainee concerns the main issue continues to be cleanliness and hygiene, concerns which were echoed in reports by HMIC and Operation Emerald during the year. The panel reports that custody staff now take a far more proactive approach in flagging up cleaning issues as 'service failures'.

The panel has continued to engage, primarily through the chair and vice-chair, in ICV cluster meetings, ICV chairs' meetings and the Hillingdon Community Police Consultative Group which is the main public forum to which the panel reports its activity.

The Hillingdon ICV panel has played a full and active part in ensuring that the rights, entitlements and interests of detainees in Hillingdon are upheld.

Chair's report

This is the 20th Annual Report from the Hillingdon Independent Custody Visitor's Panel and my second as Chair of the Group. The panel undertakes visits to Uxbridge, Heathrow and West Drayton Police Stations. Independent Custody Visitors (ICV's) make one visit to each Station every week, visiting in pairs and on a rota basis. The panel meets bi-monthly together with a representative Officer from each of these stations. At these meetings we discuss the visits made and any concerns raised.

I would like to commence my report by thanking the members who make up our panel. We are privileged to have 15 visitors on the panel, one of whom is currently on a sabbatical. These individuals work hard throughout the year arranging and carrying out the visits, attending training and of course attending meetings. Without exception they are dedicated and thorough in their continuing role as ICVs. Sometimes this is left until the end of a report as a passing comment. Their contribution to the smooth working of the panel is vital and much appreciated. Thank you all.

During the year me and several panel members attended a refresher training event held in Hammersmith. This was organised by the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) for the West London cluster of Panels. It was useful and made for some interesting discussions on just how individual visitors often see the same situation and yet view it in a strikingly differently manner.

John Hayden (The panel Vice-Chair) and I also attended a West London cluster Chairs' meeting at the same venue. There was a presentation by Maria Filipovic, Operations Manager of the Hammersmith and Fulham Drug Intervention Programme, as well as other matters of concern and general sharing of ideas and best practice.

We also attended three events at the MPA offices in Westminster. There was the 6-monthly Chairs and Vice-Chairs meeting, with 33 representatives from 24 Panels attending, where a presentation was made regarding the roll out of the Custody Nurses scheme pilot in South London (Project Herald). West London is not due to be involved for a couple of years yet and will depend on the progress made on the larger Custody Units. The planned purpose-built Hayes Custody Unit is still a long way off and we await the outcome of the various planning meetings and applications.

Peter Tihanyi gave a session to Chairs and Vice Chairs on skills for chairing a meeting. 22 delegates attended from 19 Panels. Leadership, meeting objectives and agendas were among the subjects covered.

There was a Diversity presentation by the Metropolitan Police Service's own trainers given to a group of Chairs and Vice Chair's which myself and John were lucky enough to be able to attend. I must confess to some apprehension prior to attending. But the two trainers quickly engaged the group and had us thinking a lot more fluently about this ever more publicised topic.

Recruitment continues to be an issue for the panel. Last year we assisted a neighbouring panel in filling up to the degree that they now have a waiting list! This year we are finding it harder, but not impossible, to attract high calibre volunteers to a post which is, for the most part unseen by the majority of the Borough's public. We are working with the MPA on how we can turn this around.

I continue to attend the Hillingdon Community and Police Consultative Group to represent the panel in this valuable forum. Under the leadership of Elizabeth Beggs the group continues to thrive. Thankfully Elizabeth was persuaded to continue in the Chair for another year but a new person will likely have to come forward to steer this busy group into 2009/2010. I am grateful to Elizabeth for her willingness to share her knowledge and time in helping me find my footing as Chair of the ICV Panel.

There is a section of data contained in the report which is compiled by the MPA from the visit reports we submit after each visit.

Cleaning standards seem to appear all too frequently on the visit reports. This is addressed by the Metropolitan Police Service; logging each occasion as a 'service failure' with their internal reporting system. We will continue to monitor this in Hillingdon.

Lastly I wish to thank the team at The MPA and in the borough's custody suites for assisting and enabling the work of the visitors throughout the year. It is certainly appreciated by John and myself, who hear the problems that other panels seem to have in other parts of London. Hillingdon appears to have a fine, functioning and dedicated team of volunteers and Officers to ensure a high quality Custody system is continued into 2009.

*Liam Kenny
Hillingdon ICV Panel Chair
21 January 2009*

Recruitment and membership

The MPA expects all panels to adhere to its equal opportunities policy and make every effort to ensure that all sections of the community are represented on the panel.

The membership of the panel continues to be healthily diverse in terms of age, gender and ethnicity. In June a diversity monitoring exercise was carried out across the scheme which sought to identify which, if any of the 6 common threads of diversity (age, gender, ethnicity, faith, sexual orientation and disability status) are under-represented. The purpose of this was to ensure the MPA was fulfilling its statutory responsibility in ensuring that no specific communities were denied access to membership of the scheme. As in all public bodies, disclosure of such information is voluntary but a healthy 67% of members provided responses. The results illustrated that although panel diversity doesn't form an exact match to the demographic breakdown of the borough, as identified by the London Development Agency (insert link/ref), no applicant was denied access to membership of the Hillingdon panel on the basis of their diversity response.

In 2008 4 members left the panel and 1 new member joined. The number of panel members now stands at 15. Allowing for a natural turnover of members, Hillingdon is well short of the optimum number of 26 members panels required to fulfil the scheduled number of visits and allow for some resilience. Negotiations are continuing with local press to run possible features on the panel and supplement this with paid advertising. New initiatives are being developed for a London wide campaign to raise the profile of custody visiting and it's hoped Hillingdon would benefit more than it has from previous pan-London recruitment drives.

The chair and vice-chair continue to represent the panel at meetings of the cluster of west London panels and the panel has embraced the ongoing learning modules developed to be delivered at panel meetings.

Members of the Hillingdon ICV Panel

Sabiha Ahmad

Christine Alexander

Yasmeen Aslam

Amrita Atwal

Ann Bailey

Eugene Dalton-Ruarke

Tara Gleeson

John Hayden (Vice-chair)

Susan Hopkins

Dawinder Kaur

Liam Kenny (Chair)

Joseph Nduva

David Stockford

Jane Taylor

Shirley Townsend

**Members who resigned or
retired**

Sukhi Badwal

Chris Holdaway

Angela Roberts

Ionnis Vompiris

2008 Data from panel visits to police stations

1. Number of Visits

Station	visits scheduled	visits conducted
Heathrow	52	50
Uxbridge	49	48
West Drayton	49	45
Total	150	143 (95%)

2. Visit times

Time slots	No. of visits conducted
0000 – 0359 hrs	0
0400 – 0759 hrs	1
0800 – 1159 hrs	45
1200 – 1559 hrs	38
1600 – 1959 hrs	47
2000 – 2359 hrs	12
Total	143

3. Visits Days

Days	No. of visits conducted
Monday	25
Tuesday	33
Wednesday	25
Thursday	24
Friday	22
Saturday	10
Sunday	4
Total	143

4. Visit duration

	No. of visits conducted
Less than 30 mins	54
30 – 60 mins	71
60 – 90 mins	14
90-120 mins	2
More than 120 mins	2
Total	143

5. Visit and detainee details

	No.
Total number of detainees at visits	591
PACE detainees	529
Immigration detainees	40
Other	22
Total	591
Detainees seen	369
Hillingdon throughput of detainees	*

* Data not yet available from MPS

Aims and plans for 2009

The nature of the work of the ICV scheme is such that its main aims and objectives are common to all panels and unlikely to alter from one year to the next. On that basis the panel's aims and objectives for 2009 are as follows:

- To continue to ensure that the rights, entitlements and interests of detainees in Hillingdon are upheld and to raise concerns promptly and effectively with local police or the MPA.
- To make a total of 156 visits to the custody suites at Heathrow, Uxbridge and West Drayton
- 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 Hillingdon community
- To take part in local and London wide recruitment drives with the purpose of increasing membership of the panel and endeavouring to ensure it represents the diversity of the Hillingdon population.
- To ensure that all new recruits receive local and MPA training. To continue to encourage learning through ongoing learning delivered at panel meetings and refresher training sessions.
- To continue to engage with other panels, through cluster meetings, the London ICV Conference and shared training and resources if appropriate.
- To attend and report to the Hillingdon 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 Hillingdon.
- Together with the MPA, to continue to promote and raise awareness of the work of Independent Custody Visitors.