



MPA

Metropolitan Police Authority

Islington Independent Custody Visiting Panel

Annual Report 2008



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Introduction

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

The report covers a period from January 2008 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 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 2008:

- **To make a total of not less than 52 visits to the custody suite in the borough, and visit overflow sites where necessary.**
The panel made 63 visits during the year and this included visits to the West End Central facility that was used while Islington Station was closed for a partial refurbishment.
- **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.**
The panel continues to encourage members to visit at unusual times of the day.
- **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.**
The panel acts in the interest of the detainee where possible at the time of detention. Six-weekly panel meetings are held to follow up concerns and discuss remedial action. Other matters are escalated to the Custody Directorate via the MPA.
- **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.**
A suite of refresher training modules have been created for panels. Islington panel began a programme of refresher training during the year which will be an on-going element of the panel meetings.
- **Together with the MPA, to continue to promote and raise awareness of the work of Independent Custody Visitors.**
This is a work in progress.
- **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.**
The panel has remained fairly constant but recruitment is ongoing and initiatives to reach diverse community groups is a priority.

Chairman's report

This report draws on the findings produced by a panel of volunteers conducting paired visits on a weekly basis across the borough. It is testament to their commitment and their contributions. 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.

As this report recommends, and in accordance with the ideals of the ICVA, I would wish to see an increase in promotional activities; raising awareness of the work that Islington's ICVs do on behalf of their local communities.

This year a report was produced by HM Inspectorate of Prisons and HM Inspectorate of Constabulary on an inspection visit to police custody suites in Islington Command Unit. The panel would like to acknowledge the key findings and recommendations contained within that report. Over the next year the panel would wish to see improvements based on that reports' findings; with particular regard to the concerns that have also been raised by Islington ICVs.

Some examples of areas for improvement would include; 'holistic' detainee welfare, an increased accuracy of custody records, and addressing concerns raised around detainee's rights and entitlements - the largest proportion of complaints recorded by ICVs.

I would like to express my thanks to the panel for ensuring a consistent quality and level of visits throughout 2008. I am particularly grateful that the panel managed to maintain its visit frequency during the temporary relocation to West End Central; during renovation works at Tolpuddle St. It is particularly encouraging that ICVs retain strong links with the panel ensuring our meetings are well attended; enabling concerns to be raised and dealt with expediently.

In addition I would also like to thank those panel members who have offered their time and services to other boroughs; assisting with volunteer shortages and sharing their time and skills. Finally I would also like to acknowledge the assistance of panel co-ordinator Tony Hawker who has maintained a good relationship between our 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 16 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 who made custody visits during 2008 were:

Debbie Jamieson

Eric Davis

Helen Schofield

Imelda Keaney

Jackie Hall

Jan Tucker

Laura Giuliani

Lidia Erlichman (Vice Chair)

Nick Collier

Niroo Swaffer

Oliver Snodin

Rachel Standing

Ricardo Degli-Angeli

Spencer Pawson (Chair)

Tola Akinde-Hummel

Viv Duckett

Visits to police stations

During 2008 the numbers of detainees held in Islington police custody facilities were as follows:

- Islington (Tolpuddle St) 8,018
 - Holloway 944
- Total 8,962

Detainee concerns

There have been few major concerns voiced by detainees interviewed during 2008. Of all detainees who accepted a visit, 57% had no complaints about their treatment while detained. The issues most reported to ICVs by detainees were: issues concerning legal advice or rights including telephone calls not having been received (10%); not receiving medical attention promptly from the FME service (5%); requests for washing facilities (4%); requests for or complaints about not being offered food and drink (3%); complaints about the temperature of the cells and/or lack of blankets when cold (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 at panel meetings (i.e. those listed on part 1 of the visit report form) concerned non-functioning or damaged elements of the infrastructure, equipment and furnishings and the cleanliness, hygiene and tidiness of the custody suite generally.

After this, panel ICVs required a response from the police on matters concerning detainee rights seeming to have been delayed or withheld. Reviews not having been conducted or recorded as conducted were picked up on several occasions. The FME service, the delay in examining detainees and the FME facilities were also of concern on occasions. After this, responses were required about the general comfort and basic welfare of detainees such as requests for food, drink and opportunities for washing.

Of the 63 visit report forms that the panel submitted following their visits, 14 had no matters requiring a police response indicated. However at meeting some the general points were discussed in addition to those formally raised on the reports.

The Islington station had some renovation work done in the latter part of the year to correct the problems that were highlighted by the panel in many reports. The general decay to the fabric of the building had been causing cells to remain out of use for prolonged periods. Also, the air-conditioning, which was ineffective in hot weather was also upgraded. During these works the custody suite closed and was relocated to the West End Central station. Six visit report forms were completed during this period.

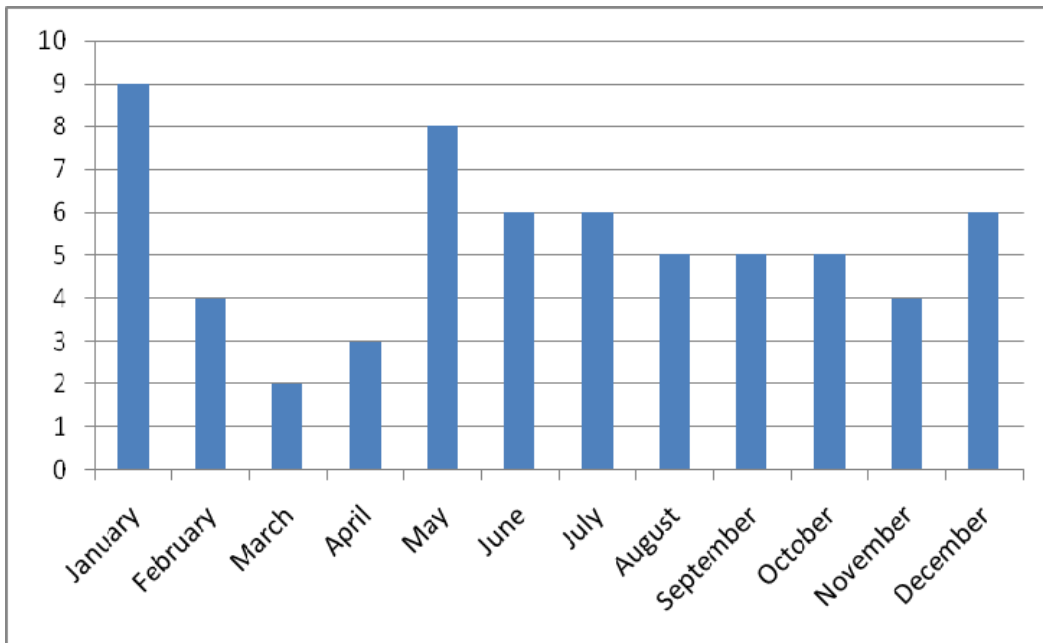
Data from panel visits

1. Number of Visits (All Stations):

Station

Station	Annual no. of visits	% of annual target
Islington (Tolpuddle St)	55	-
West End Central	6	-
Holloway	2	
Total	63	121%

2. Breakdown by month of visits in London borough of Islington 2008:

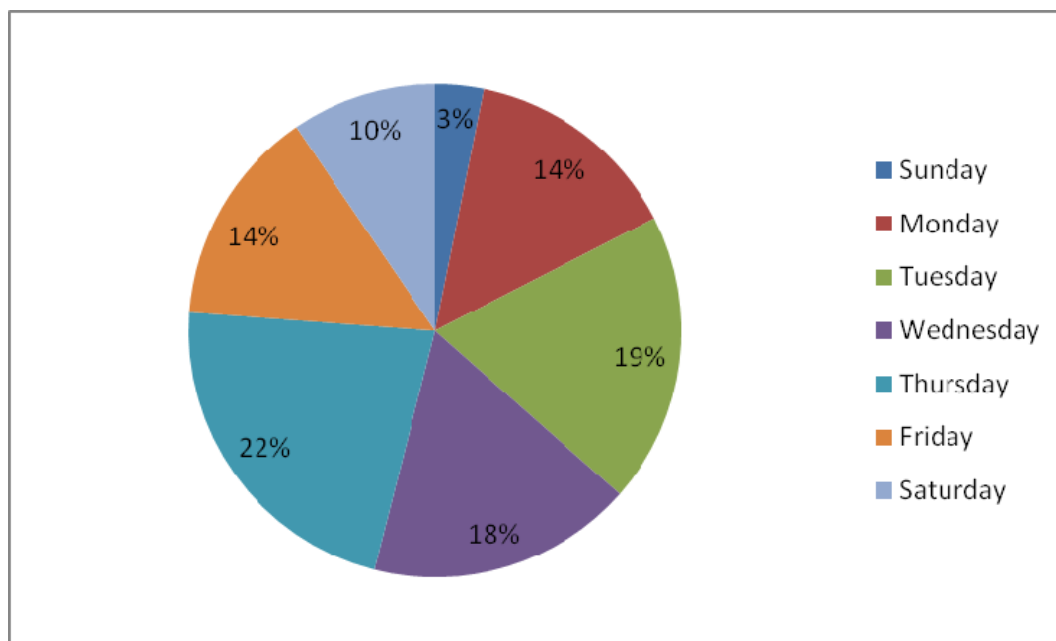


3. Time of Day of Visits

Time range	Number of visits	%
00:01 – 03:00 hrs	0	-
03:01 – 06:00	0	-
06:01 – 09:00	3	5%
09:01 – 12:00	15	24%
12:01 – 15:00	10	16%
15:01 – 18:00	18	29%
18:01 – 21:00	17	27%
21:01 – 00:00	0	-
Total	63	-

4. Days of Visits (MPS only)

	Annual no.	% of all visits
Sunday	2	3%
Monday	9	14%
Tuesday	12	19%
Wednesday	11	18%
Thursday	14	22%
Friday	9	14%
Saturday	6	10%
Total	63	-



5. Details of Detainees at the times of Visits

		% of Total
Detainees held at time of visits	524	-
Detainees offered a visit	374	-
Detainees seen	271	72%
Detainees who refused to be seen	103	28%

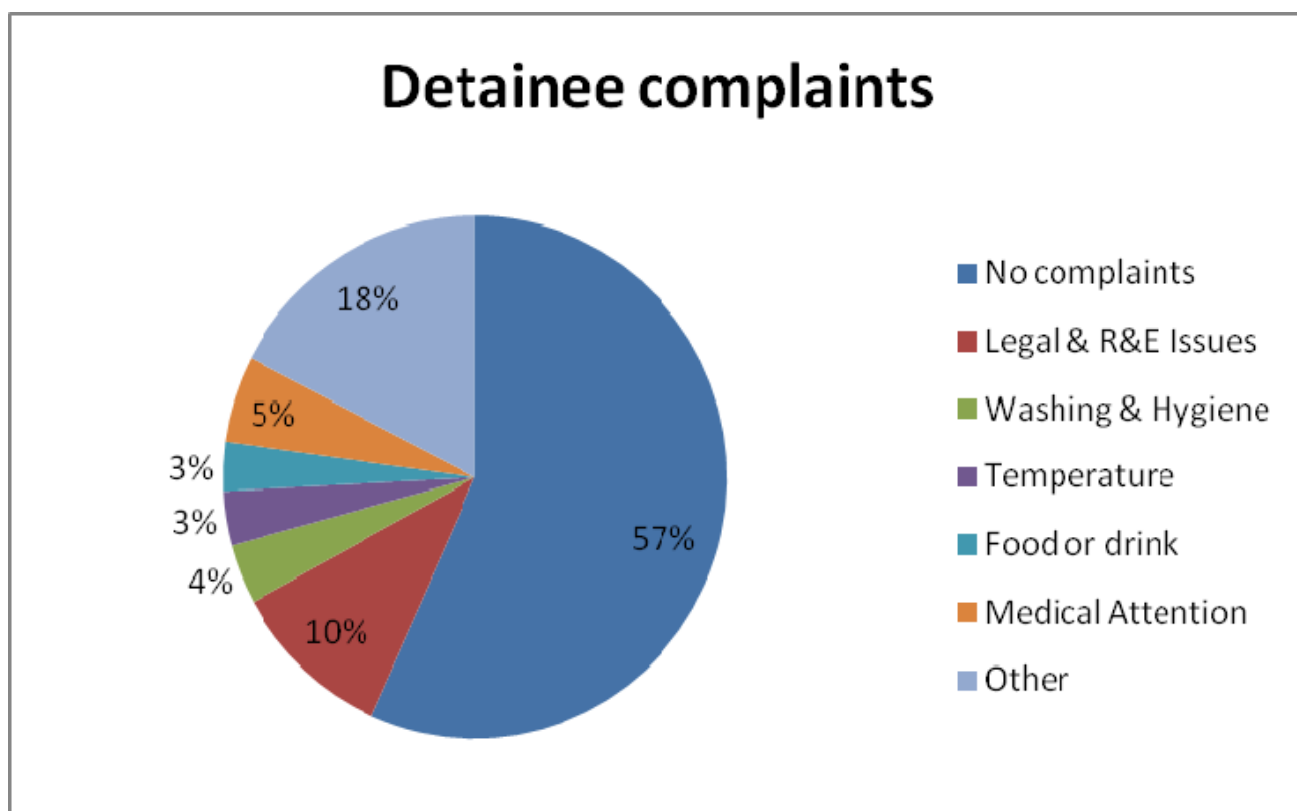
6. Numbers of detainees offered visits by type:

Detainee Type	Offered	Accepted	Declined
Pace detainees	358	256	102
Immigration detainees	12	12	0
Other	4	3	1

Of a total of 524 detainees: 419 were adult males; 42 were juvenile males; 59 were adult females and 4 were juvenile females.

7. Details of detainees concerns:

Detainee concerns raised in Islington in 2008



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. 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.
- d. Temperature in the custody areas/cells and availability of blankets.
- e. Debris seen in the cells such as articles of clothing and old food containers
- f. Procedural issues such as periodic checks & reviews not being maintained and issues concerning detainee rights and entitlements such as notifying relatives of detention,
- g. Requests for food, drink and opportunities for washing.

Those reports with no matters requiring a response	14
Infrastructure/furnishings/fittings	15
Cleaning, tidiness and general hygiene	13
FME Service and FME room	7
Temperature and availability of blankets	7

Debris in cells	1
Detainee rights – delays/procedures not followed etc	14
Reviews not being done/recorded	6
Requests for food & drink	2
Personal hygiene – requests for washing facilities	6
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 52 visits to the custody suite in the borough, and visit overflow sites where necessary.
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