



MPA

Metropolitan Police Authority

Sutton Independent Custody Visiting Panel

Annual Report 2008



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Introduction

This is the 2008 annual report of the Sutton Independent Custody Visiting Panel (ICVP) covering the period 1 January 2008 to 31 December 2008.

The purpose of this report is to give a general overview of the work of Sutton ICVP and:

- Provide the local community and the MPA with information about the visits made including the treatment of those held in custody
- Set out the issues and concerns that have arisen during 2008
- Evaluate the panel's performance
- Set out the panel's objectives and plans for 2009.

We hope this will increase knowledge and understanding of the London Independent Custody Visiting Scheme.

Who are Independent Custody Visitors?

Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) are members of the local community who volunteer their time to visit police stations unannounced to check on the conditions and treatment of people in police custody.

What do Independent Custody Visitors do?

Once a week two visitors from the Sutton ICVP attend Sutton police station at a random unannounced time to make an inspection and speak to detainees. On arrival at the police station, visitors are escorted to the custody area where they speak to a number of detainees in their cells and complete a structured report form.

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 works in partnership with the police 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 to provide a custody visiting scheme in London. The scheme has the full support and cooperation of the Commissioner and the Borough Commander for Sutton, 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.

How to become an Independent Custody Visitor

The MPA is seeking to recruit visitors from as many different backgrounds and communities as possible to ensure the scheme reflects London's diversity.

To be eligible to join the London ICV Scheme you must be 18 or over and live, work or study in the capital. Visitors must have no direct involvement in the criminal justice system. For example, they cannot be serving police officers or staff, special constables or magistrates.

For more information please see the MPA web site on the ICV Scheme at: <http://www.mpa.gov.uk/partnerships/icv/get-involved/> or contact: ICV Co-ordinator by freephone: 0808 100 1036, minicom: 020 7202 0173, by e-mail: icvrecruitment@mpa.gov.uk or enquiries by post: ICV Co-ordinator, MPA, FREEPOST, LON17808, LONDON SW1H 0DY.

Chair's Report

Welcome to the 2008 annual report of the Sutton ICVP.

After the challenges of 2007: centralisation of administration by the MPA and the introduction of the National Strategy for Police Information Systems (NSPIS - computerisation of custody records), 2008 was a quieter year.

I am pleased to report that the Sutton custody suite remains a well run facility and that there were no major issues in 2008. In general the Sutton ICVP found that detainees were treated satisfactorily within the provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE). Many detainees praised the custody staff for the high standard of care shown towards them and the quality of the facilities. However, the panel is aware of the dangers of becoming complacent and remains vigilant in ensuring that PACE is adhered to.

Sutton, along with Bromley and Lewisham ICV panels, enjoys the benefits of having a modern custody suite provided through a Private Finance Initiative and unlike some panels we only have one custody suite to visit.

The Sutton ICVP is very proud of its 100% visiting record over the past 4 years and I thank all panel members for their ongoing dedication and commitment to custody visiting.

Independent custody visiting plays a crucial role in providing oversight of police practice in regard to people held in police detention. It is through the commitment of the Sutton ICVP that the community in Sutton can be assured that the welfare, rights and entitlements of individuals held in the Sutton custody suite are provided in accordance with the law.

On behalf of the panel I thank the following:

- Chief Inspector Mark Hill for his support in: promptly investigating all issues raised with him and attending all quarterly panel meetings.
- The MPS officers in the custody suite and the John Laing staff working on the front desk and in the custody suite for being professional, courteous and co-operative, even when the police station is busy.
- Kerry McClelland, MPA ICV Scheme Manager and her team, for overseeing the scheme and importantly not compromising the independence of ICVs. Also, for providing excellent initial and refresher training so that ICV panels can perform their essential community role.
- Last but not least thanks to Sarah Walker, our MPA Co-ordinator, for her professionalism and excellent support.

Patrick McHale
Sutton ICVP Chair

Aims and Achievements

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 Sutton police station to check and report on the treatment of people in police custody and 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 52 visits; varying the days of the week and times of visits to get an accurate picture of the Custody Suite.
- To monitor the findings of reports and to discuss concerns with the Police immediately if need be and/or at the next Panel meeting.
- To continue to ensure that the rights and interests of detainees are upheld.
- To endeavour to attend all panel meetings.
- To work with the MPA on the recruitment of new members; to ensure that the membership does not fall below current level and ideally reflects the community served by the Panel.
- To ensure that new members undertake MPA initial training and that experienced members undertake refresher courses.
- To promote and raise awareness of the London ICV Scheme within Sutton.
- To continue to assist the MPA to fulfil its statutory responsibility to provide independent custody visiting in London.

Visits

In 2008 the panel made a total of 52 visits against the target of 52. This represents an achievement of 100% of the panels visiting target. The panel has achieved 100% of its visiting target during the last 4 years.

A good spread of visiting times was achieved in 2008. However, fewer visits were conducted on Sundays and Thursdays than other days. 16 visits were made between 08:00 and 11:59 and 11 visits were conducted between 12:00 and 15:59. 14 visits were made between 16:00 and 19:59 and 11 visits were conducted between 20:00 and 23:59. No visits were conducted between 00:00 and 07:59. Although detainees have a right to eight hours undisturbed rest it is important that a small number of visits take place between these times to ensure the panel checks on the running of the custody suite at night. The panel will vary times more in 2009.

Detainee concerns cover a wide range of subjects and in the majority of cases there were no significant issues raised. The only recurring issues that have been recorded in ICV reports during 2008 were: delayed access to the custody suite and access to shower and wash facilities (see page 11).

Meetings and events

The panel meets quarterly to discuss concerns raised on visits, administration issues and to share experiences and **the panel has a good 77% attendance record.** Police representatives attend each meeting. Chief Inspector Mark Hill attended all of our quarterly meetings and Inspector Stuart Rushworth attended the April and August meetings. Both officers kept the panel advised of developments at Sutton custody suite and within borough. The panel has an excellent working relationship with the police representatives and would like to thank them for their prompt response to panel concerns and diligent attendance at meetings throughout 2008.

2008 was a successful year for recruitment with 2 new members joining the panel (see page 10). Both new members attended their initial training course and successfully completed their 6 month probationary periods.

Three experienced panel member attended central refresher training at the MPA. In 2009 refresher training will be given at panel meetings in addition to central training. This will enable all experienced members to attend refresher training.

The MPA conducted a diversity monitoring exercise during the year; for the first time the panel has information about how it compares to the local community in Sutton (see page 9).

During the year the Chair, Vice Chair and Panel Members represented the Sutton Panel at:

- Meetings of the Sutton Community and Police Forum
- Meetings of the London ICVP Chairs and Vice Chairs with the MPA
- A meeting of the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the South / South-East Cluster of ICVPs
- The London Independent Custody Visiting Conference
- The MPA Stop and Search Conference
- The MPA Equality and Diversity Workshop
- The MPA Christmas Social

The panel continue to use every opportunity to raise public awareness of independent custody visiting in Sutton and London-wide.

The panel would like to thank Fiona White for hosting an enjoyable panel social event in December. Everyone agreed that it was good to talk to their ICV colleagues in a relaxed environment and get to know each other a little better.

Panel Membership

Sutton is one of the smallest London boroughs with a population of approximately 180,934. According to DMAG¹ figures 15% of the population of Sutton belongs to a black and minority ethnic group (BME). The gender figures show the population is 51% female and 49% male.

As already mentioned, recent diversity monitoring has allowed the panel to consider how well it reflects the community it represents. 85% of Sutton residents are white and in 2008 this was true of 89% of the panel's members. The membership is also representative of the borough as a whole in terms of gender. 56% of the panel are male and 44% are female.

Members of Sutton ICVP & number of visits made in 2008

• Debbie Barnard	(Sabbatical)	5
• Mahmood Bhatti	(Left October 2008)	8
• Tony Budden	(Joined August 2008)	5
• Alison Griffiths	(Vice Chair)	16
• Richard Lennard		15
• Jackie McAndrew	(Joined May 2008)	9
• Patrick McHale	(Chair)	20
• Sem Simkins		15
• Fiona White		15

Mahmood Bhatti left the panel in October 2008. We thank him for his service to the panel and the local community and wish him well for the future. The panel finished 2008 with 7 active members and another member on sabbatical leave.

¹ Population and diversity figures are 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.

Recruitment

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. Since April 2007, panels have been asked to adhere to recruitment and interviewing guidance provided by the MPA.

Throughout 2008 we actively promoted Sutton ICVP with the aim of recruiting new members. Local recruitment included sending posters and leaflets to all Sutton libraries, Citizen's Advice Bureau's, free legal advice centres and various doctors and dentist surgeries and colleges across Sutton. The MPA also advertised regularly in the Metro and Evening Standard newspapers. The panel is registered with Sutton Volunteer Centre and advertises on the national volunteering website www.do-it.org.uk

Through these efforts we have raised the profile of Sutton ICVP and in 2008 the panel successfully recruited two new members. New members complete a six-month probationary period. During this time they must complete their initial MPA training course and visit with experienced panel members. Jackie McAndrew completed her initial training course in June 2008 and Tony Budden completed his in November 2008. Both members successful completed their probationary periods.

However, as our membership was reduced to 7 active members by the end of 2008 and we continue to seek new members of all ages and from all parts of the community.

Station Visit Issues

There is one custody suite in Sutton which is located at Sutton Police Station. The panel makes weekly, unannounced visits to the Sutton custody suite.

Sutton has a modern well maintained custody suite with 30 cells. Thankfully Sutton ICVP does not encounter issues to do with the physical conditions under which detainees are kept, unlike many London ICVPs visiting older custody suites. However, the panel is never complacent and issues of concern are immediately brought to the attention of the Custody Sergeant / Chief Inspector. There were only two recurring issues or queries recorded in visit reports in 2008.

- The panel have, on three occasions, reported that entry to the custody suite was delayed. On arrival at the public enquiry counter at the police station, ICVs must identify themselves and the purpose of their visit. At this point they should be admitted immediately to the custody area. Access should be delayed only where ICVs may be placed in danger. If delays occur a full explanation should be given to the ICVs and this will be included in the ICV visit report. On all occasions the reason for the delay was explained to the ICVs and recorded in the visit report. No detainees raised concerns or issues during these visits.
- The panel also raised concerns about the access that detainees have to showers and wash facilities and highlighted this on three occasions. Detainees are not always aware that they need to ask for a shower or wash if they want one, and when they do ask are sometimes told that there are not the staff available to facilitate it. The panel would like to see all detainees held for over 24 hours to be offered a shower. This is particularly important for Immigration detainees as they can be held in the custody suite for up to 7 days.
- On one visit during 2008 a detainee raised an allegation of assault or maltreatment on arrest. In such cases the custody visitors always ensured that the detainee is aware of and understands the procedure to make a complaint. In addition they have checked the details of the allegation with the detainee's custody record (when the detainee gives permission for them to do so) and raised the issue with an Inspector if they have any concerns.

Overall the panel continues to be impressed with the Officers in the Division, their helpful, courteous and professional attitude and the high standard of care they show towards detainees.

Statistical Analysis of 2008 Panel Reports

Numbers of detainees in custody in Sutton Custody Suite during 2008 by gender and age

Male	Female	Total
5355	1156	6511

Juvenile / Youth	Adult	Total
1305	5206	6511

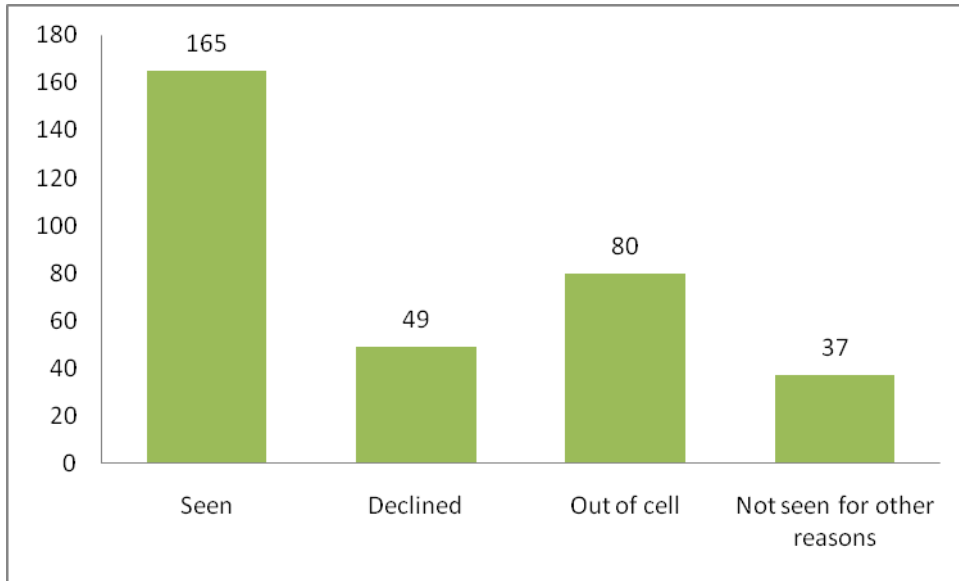
Number of detainees seen by ICVs and total number held at Sutton Custody Suite

Year	Seen	Total	% Seen
2008	165	6511	2.5%
2007	160	6559	2.4%

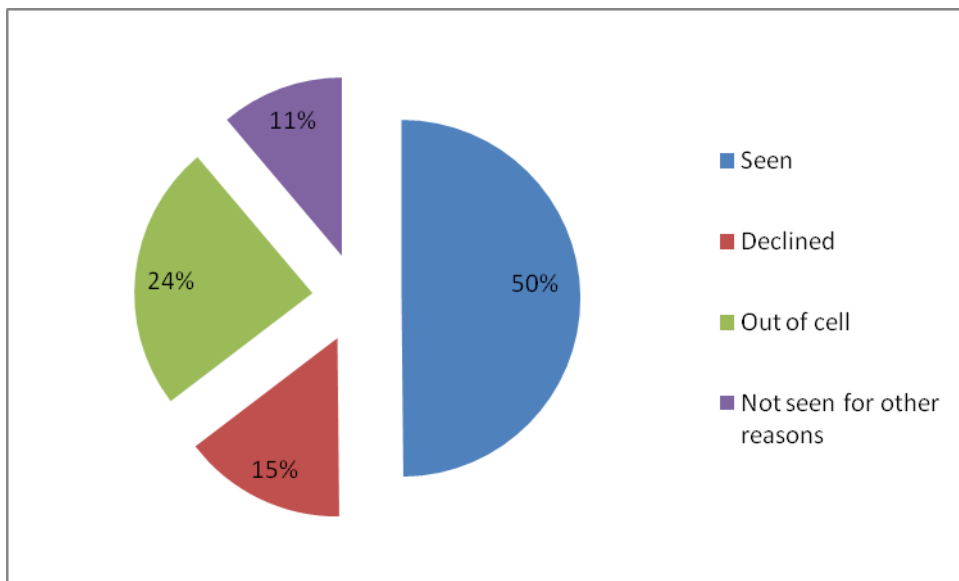
Breakdown of detainees in custody in Sutton Custody Suite during visits by gender, age and category

PACE Adult Male	199
PACE Juvenile Male	36
PACE Adult Female	24
PACE Juvenile Female	10
Immigration Adult Male	44
Immigration Juvenile Male	2
Immigration Adult Female	6
Immigration Juvenile Female	1
Other Adult Male	9
Other Juvenile Male	0
Other Adult Female	0
Other Juvenile Female	0
Total	331

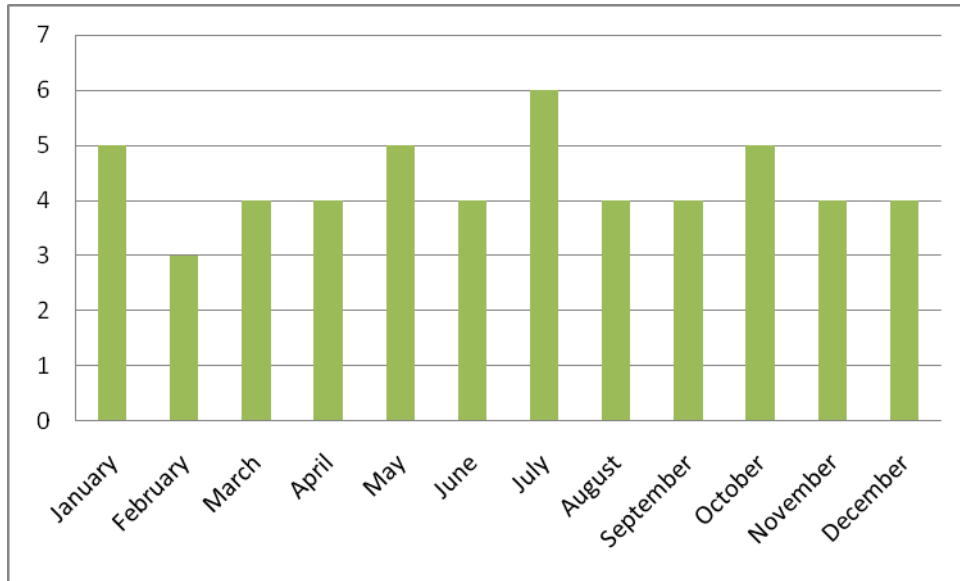
Number of detainees seen by ICVs



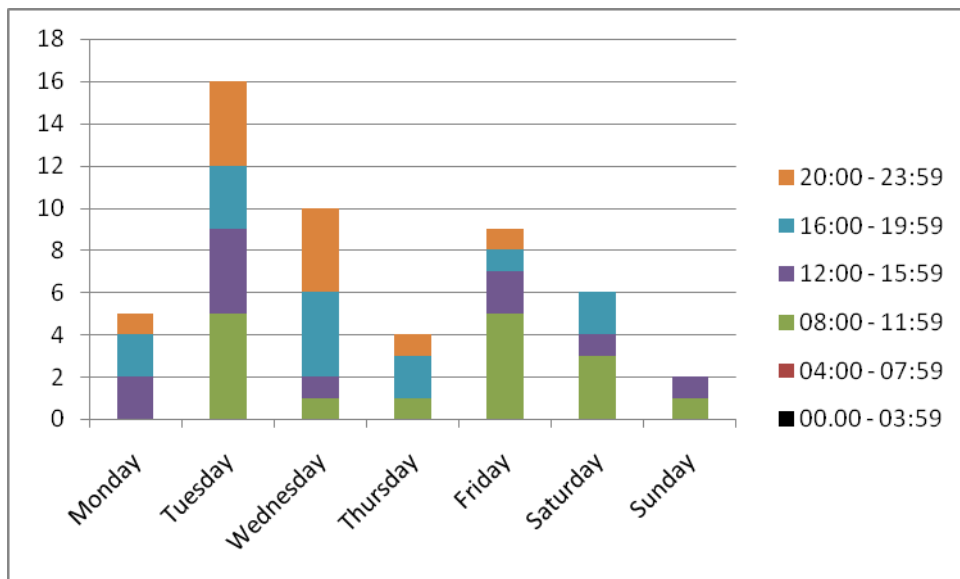
Percentage of detainees seen by ICVs



Visits by month

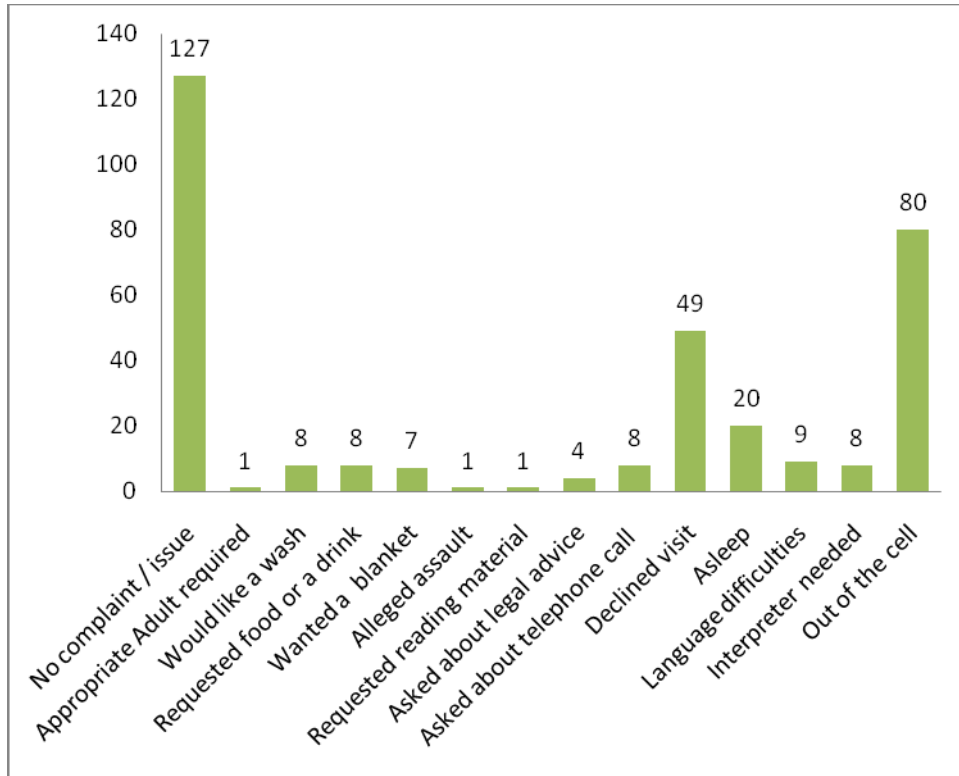


Visits by day and time period



Detainee concerns

When visitors speak to detainees they record any concerns that detainees raise with them. The chart below shows a summary of concerns raised by detainees during visits made to Sutton station in 2008.



Targets and Plans for 2009

1. To continue to ensure that the rights and interests of detainees are upheld.
2. To make an average of one visit a week; varying the days of the week and times of visits to get an accurate picture of the Custody Suite.
3. To monitor the findings of reports and to discuss concerns with the Police immediately if need be and/or at the next Panel meeting.
4. To endeavour to attend all panel meetings.
5. To work with the MPA on the recruitment of new members; to ensure that the membership does not fall below current level and ideally reflects the community served by the Panel.
6. To ensure that new members undertake MPA initial training and that experienced members undertake refresher courses.
7. To promote and raise awareness of the London ICV Scheme within Sutton.
8. To continue to assist the MPA to fulfil its statutory responsibility to provide independent custody visiting in London.