

Barnet Independent Custody Visitors Panel

ANNUAL REPORT 2009

CONTENTS PAGE

1. INTRODUCTION.....	3
2. ACHIEVEMENTS.....	4
3. CHAIR'S REPORT	5
4. RECRUITMENT AND MEMBERSHIP	6
5. VISITS TO POLICE STATIONS	7
6. DATA FROM PANEL VISITS	8
7. PLANS FOR THE FORTHCOMING YEAR 2010	11

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the annual report of the Barnet Independent Custody Visitors (ICV) Panel.

This report covers the period from 01/01/09 to 31/12/09.

The purpose of this report is to give a general overview of the work of the Barnet ICV Panel and:

- Evaluate the panel's performance
- Provide the local community and the Metropolitan Police Authority (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 2010.

The 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 in each borough into one London scheme. The scheme has the full support and cooperation of the Commissioner and the Borough Commander for Barnet, 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.

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.

ACHIEVEMENTS

The Barnet panel currently makes two scheduled visits per week to Colindale Police Station, which is above the minimum requirement of one visit per week per 24/7 custody suite, that the MPA sets panels as a target. Therefore, visiting targets for the borough have been exceeded by around 70%.

Barnet Panel meetings have been held every month at Colindale Police Station, and are well attended by its members and the police. This frequency will alter to quarterly meetings from the beginning of 2010 due to a change in resource allocation at the MPA. It is hoped however that the good work of the panel will continue and that with adequate communications between meetings, positive feedback can still be achieved.

In June of 2009 the Barnet panel took part in the second phase pilot of self-introduction. Self-introduction involves ICVs introducing themselves directly to detainees and enquiring whether or not the detainee wishes to see them. ICVs also directly ask the detainees if they can look at their custody record. This was very successful for Barnet, and visit acceptance rose by 15%.

The Borough Commander takes an interest in the affairs of the Panel, and the Deputy Borough Commander is also always available to the Chair for consultation, should the need arise. The panel wish to thank the Borough Commander, Chief Superintendent Neil Basu for continuing to allow it to meet at the police station, and finds this arrangement most satisfactory.

The panel's police liaison officer, Sergeant Peter White, continues to assist the panel in its work. The panel would like to thank Sgt White for his cooperation and help in investigating any concerns and observations, and in answering questions at panel meetings.

The Chair has continued to represent the panel by giving regular presentations to new police officers in the borough, on the work of ICVs. The Chair and Vice Chair have also represented the panel meeting of the London ICV Chairs and at Cluster meetings. In 2010 the borough's new engagement group is due to begin its work and it is hoped that the Chair will represent the panel at this forum.

The panel aimed to maintain its 2008 membership level, with a minimum level of nine as stipulated by the MPA. For most of 2009 this was exceeded until late autumn when one member resigned.

Regarding the diversity of Barnet panel, this has slipped to a male/female imbalance, and it is hoped that future recruitment will attract more women as well as the age groups 18 to 34 to improve the diversity in the panel's age make up.

Despite many panel members having busy home and professional lives, with some also maintaining other community roles, attendance at meetings and visit performance has been consistently good throughout the year.

CHAIR'S REPORT

I would like to thank all Barnet custody visitors who have maintained the level of visiting during the year. Their cooperation and sense of duty has been very much appreciated by the MPA, Barnet borough police service and by myself.

I would like to thank all panel members for the level of support they have provided me, as Chairman, with special thanks to the Vice-Chairman John Bailey for all his advice and assistance to me during the year.

Thanks also go to all custody staff at Colindale, whose cooperation often in difficult circumstances, has been of great value to the panel. I would like to thank Inspectors Jason Moseley and Jason Wu, our Custody Managers for all their help and assistance during the year, and we wish them well for the future in their new roles. Special thanks to our police liaison officer Sergeant Peter White for his help and valued assistance.

We would like to thank the MPA for overseeing the ICV Scheme and for providing the funds and training, so that we can perform our community role. Our special thanks must go to our coordinator Emma Nuttall, as without her assistance we could not perform our duties as well as we do. We also thank Chief Superintendent Neil Basu, Borough Commander, for allowing us to meet at Colindale police station.

Gerry Kirby
Barnet ICVP Chair
December 2009

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 race, religion, gender, sexuality, ability and age on the panel.

At the end of 2009 the Barnet panel had ten accredited members.

Name	Appointed
Allen Williams	1998
Evelyn Kennedy	1998
Gerry Kirby – Chair	2003
John Bailey – Vice Chair	2004
Minnette Brown	2004
Mohammed Youssef	2006
Ocho Agwu	2006
Janet Renton	2008
George Papadopoulos	2008
Ibrahim Incedal (Transferred in 2009 from Hackney)	2008

The following members resigned

Ellen Woodhouse	2007
Pamela Littman	2008

Diversity

The panel comprises of seven men and three women with varying diversity in age and ethnicity. One third of the panel are non-white which narrowly exceeds the borough's own make-up of 30% according to the most recent 2007 Data Management and Analysis Group (DMAG) statistics from the Greater London Authority (GLA) for 2007. The gender breakdown is weighted towards male with less than a third of the panel being female. The general population of Barnet is of a greater female proportion by 4% so this fails to meet this proportion by some way.

Recruitment

Although the panel is now regarded as full and a waiting list is in operation, it is hoped that one or two new members will be appointed in 2010.

VISITS TO POLICE STATIONS

Along with regular visits to Colindale Police Station, the panel have also made some visits to Barnet custody suite over the year, as this has been used in recent months for a number of operations including the burglary prevention Operation Strongbox. Good standards of care have been noted at all stations.

There have been few major concerns to the panel this year. The relationship with the custody staff has continued to be positive and the panel are happy with the way in which jailors have explained the ICV role to detainees.

It has been rare for there to be a delay in entering the custody suite, even though visits are often at busy times. It is a source of satisfaction to the panel that there have been few complaints, if any from detainees, on how they are treated at Colindale.

As mentioned previously Barnet panel took part in the second phase pilot of self-introduction, whereby ICVs introduce themselves directly to detainees. This was very successful for Barnet, despite uptake being of a usually high proportion of those offered a visit acceptance rose by 15% from 72% to 87%. The panel will continue to use this method of introduction during visits in 2010, due to its effectiveness.

DATA FROM PANEL VISITS

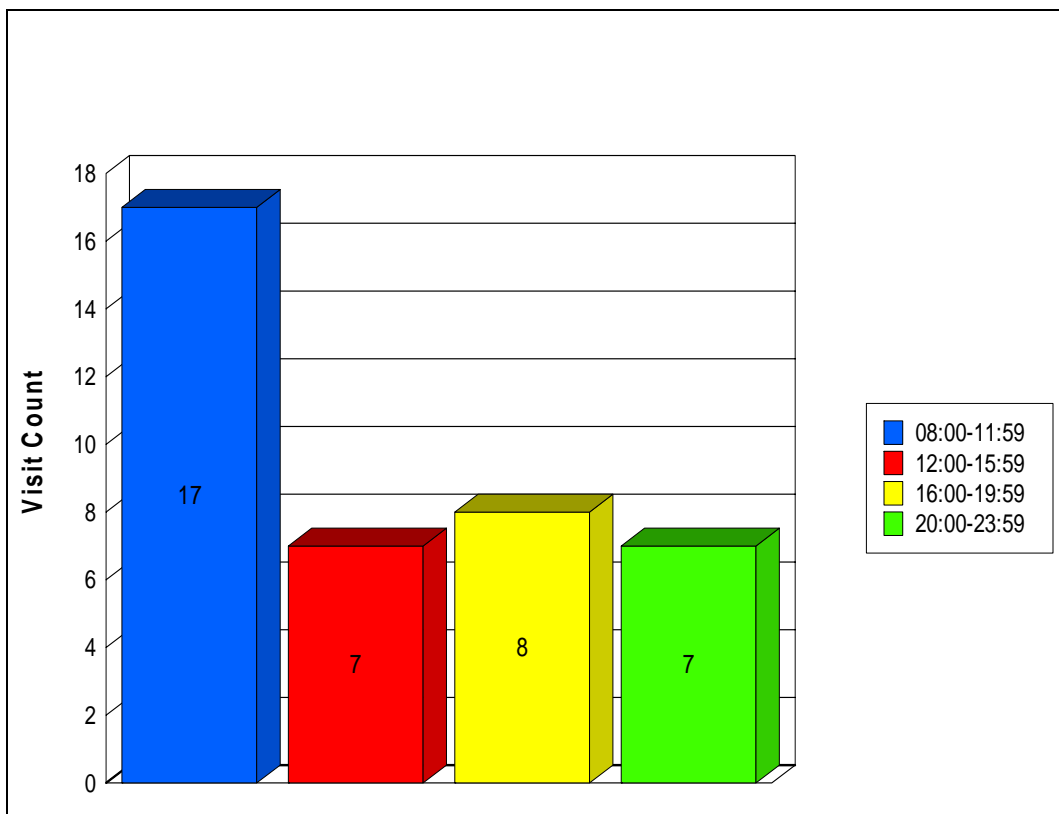
Visit Figures for 2009

1. Number of visits

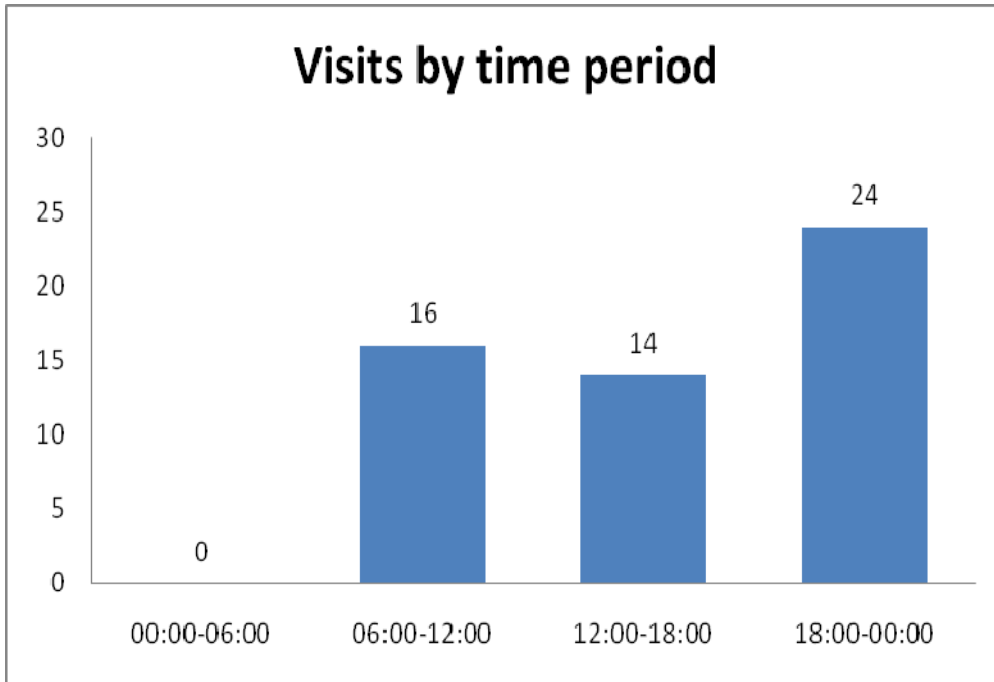
Station	Annual no. of visits	% of Annual Target*
Colindale (24/7)	89	171%
Barnet	4	N/A
Whetstone	0	N/A
Total	93	N/A

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

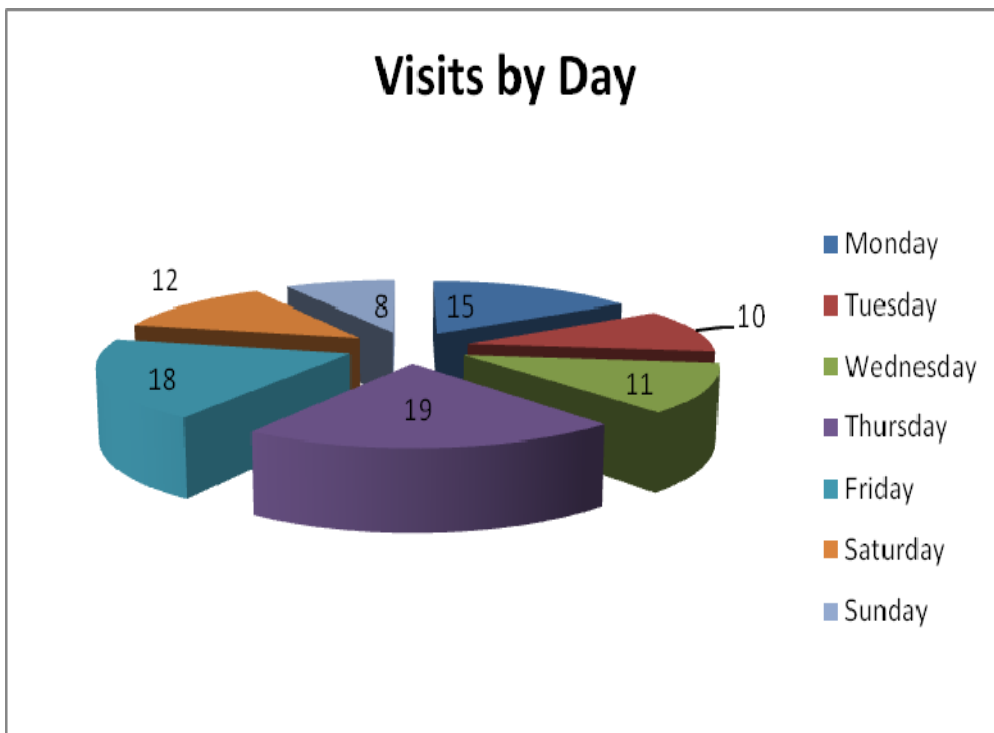
2. Time of visits January to May 2009



June to December 2009



3. Days visits took place



4. Self-Introduction pilot

Comparison statistics:

1 December 2008 to 31 May 2009

Detainees offered a visit = 299	No. Detainees	% of those offered
Detainees who accepted	216	72.25%
Detainees who refused a visit	83	27.75%

Results of pilot:

1 June to 30 November 2009

Detainees offered a visit = 345	No. Detainees	% of those offered
Detainees who accepted	301	87.25%
Detainees who refused a visit	44	12.75%

**Increased acceptance via self-introduction of 15%.

5. Overall detainee total held in police custody in Barnet

No. held January – December 2009 in Barnet	8599
No. held in custody during independent custody visits - 2009	742
% of total custody figure in detention during ICV visits - 2009	8.6%

6. Issues raised during interviews with detainees

Those issues raised on more than 10 occasions from January to May 2009 were actually very few, and related to **telephone call requests and the need for Interpreters due to language difficulties.**

Similarly data from the new ICV database concluded similarly, for the months June to December 2009, but also included (more than 10) requests for **blankets, telephone calls and requests for food and drink.** Requests such as those mentioned above have often not been denied, more so the detainees did not know they could ask, or they may not have present when other needs were being offered such as food etc. In raising these concerns on behalf of detainees, their questions, queries and requests are often met.

PLANS FOR THE FORTHCOMING **YEAR 2010**

Targets:

- A minimum of one visit per week to Colindale Police Station.
- Carry out visits to Whetstone and Barnet Stations as and when in use.
- To maintain panel membership at a minimum of nine (as stipulated by the MPA).
- To improve links and feedback between the panel and the local Community Engagement Group.
- To raise the profile of the panel and scheme across the borough through wider circulation of the annual report and publicity materials.