

# Camden Independent Custody Visitors Panel

## Annual Report 2009

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# Introduction

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

The report covers a period from January 2009 to December 2009

The purpose of the report is to:

- 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 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 Camden, 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 Camden in line with other parts of the London ICV Scheme.

# 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 Camden panel currently schedules one visit per week to each of the 24/7 MPS Police Stations in the borough – Holborn (EO) and Kentish Town (EK) Stations – with custody suites. By arrangement the panel schedules one visit a week to the British Transport Police (BTP) station at Tottenham Court Road. One visit a week per station is the visit frequency required of the panel by the Metropolitan Police Authority. During 2009 the panel managed a visiting level of over 79.5% for all of the three stations – BTP 82.7%; EO 75% (including 3 visits to West End Central Station during refurbishment work); and EK 80.8%.

The membership of the panel at the end of the year stood at 15. During the year the panel did have more members but some resigned and two members took sabbaticals but have not yet returned. The panel is under the optimum panel size of 26 members which would be ideal given the needs of the borough. This shortfall has meant that the panel members have had the higher workload of a visit every 3 weeks which is not ideal.

The self introduction pilot has during the year seen the take up by detainees of ICV visits increase. At MPS sites take up has gone from 56% in 2008 to 79% in 2009. At the BTP site at Tottenham Court Road take up has increased from 76% in 2008 to 82% in 2009.

During the year a new Custody Manager, Inspector Taylor Wilson took over from Inspector Duncan McKinlay and the positive working relationship with the panel has been maintained. Sean Wilson continued as Chief Inspector of Operations and the ICV Chair continued to represent the panel at the Camden Custody Steering Group. The ICV panel is also represented on the Camden Custody Users Group by a member.

The panel met 8 times during the year at Camden Town Hall at a meeting frequency of one panel meeting every six weeks. The staff at Camden Town Hall have been extremely efficient in providing committee rooms for the meetings and other panel requirements. The staff on duty at the times of the meeting have always been approachable and helpful.

# 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.

During 2008 and 2009 there was an increase of applications, interviews and appointments for membership of the panel. However there was a problem of retention of ICVs with several leaving after only a short period of service. Also, some experienced members left for personal reasons during the year. There was, however a very reliable core of members who have kept the panel steady. It remains the longstanding objective of the panel to have a membership of approximately 26. This was not achieved in 2009 but the panel finished the year with 15 members (with 2 on sabbatical). During the year nine members were recruited and eight members resigned.

The panel has always endeavoured to be broadly representative of Camden and has in 2009 had some success in beginning to match the borough profile. The panel has become generally younger and now has a less unequal split of male and female members.

The following members undertook visits for the panel during 2009.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Appointed during 2009</b>	<b>(Date of last visit)</b>
Suzanne Idehen, Chair		
Jane Atkinson		
Dinah Gallop		
Christel Linden		
Michael Hennessey		
Nina Ariff		
Laura Sarkis		
Joe Aikins		
Jacob Head		
Lily Silverton		
Alan Ward		
Frances Sealy	15/01/2009	
Emma Stuart-Smith	21/05/2009	
Margaret Haines	28/05/2009	
Natalie McGann	11/07/2009	
<b>Resigned</b>		
Conor O'Luby		16/12/2009
Sarah Smith		10/10/2009
Becca Smalldon		01/09/2009
Eminike Ihekoronye	19/01/2009	27/03/2009
Nigel Barber	14/02/2009	08/04/2009
Ilenda Touzaya	14/02/2009	23/05/2009
William Pyle	20/05/2009	13/08/2009
Lauren Williams	04/07/2009	29/08/2009
Sophie Spells		27/08 2008

Recruitment remains a priority.

# Chair's report

2009 was a significant one for custody visiting in Camden with the panel stabilising after the problems of 2007 and the sudden influx of new ICVs in 2008. Recruitment continued and new members came on board but there were problems with retention. Some new recruits were not reliable, underestimating the demands of the role, and left after only short periods of service. Some very good members of the panel left for personal reasons in the latter part of the year and we remember their contribution with thanks. Recruitment still remains a priority but now we have a bigger group of experienced ICVs and the responsibility of inducting new members can be shared more widely. This can only be a good thing for the future of the panel.

The panel was one of the first four chosen to pilot self introduction on ICV visits. The pilot was originally for 6 months but was extended and further panels included. The Camden panel has found this to be beneficial with detainees being able to respond directly to ICVs when they arrive at the cell. Originally, there was a dip in the number of detainees agreeing to talk to the ICVs. During 2009, however, there has been an increase in take-up by detainees of 6% at the BTP site (Tottenham Court Road) and 23% at the two MPS sites. This has been a successful initiative by the MPA and has the approval of the panel.

Because of a range of factors, some alluded to above, the panel did not fully meet its planned visiting target of one visit per week to each of its 24/7 stations. Our commitment to visit each week remains our priority and we look forward to achieving greater consistency in the coming year. There have been some issues that have been taken forward to the panel meetings, and a response from the police has been requested, but most of the concerns that come to our attention are resolved at the time of the visit. This shows that Camden ICVs are able and confident and also that there is a good working relationship between the Camden ICVs and the police both at BTP and MPS facilities.

At Tottenham Court Road station we have DCI Dave King, who has been in post for some time now as the custody manager and the standards are very high as a result. At the main MPS sites, Kentish Town and Holborn many of the officers are longstanding and very experienced and the standards are also high. Over the year, Inspector Taylor Wilson replaced Inspector Duncan McKinlay and the responses to our enquiries continue to be prompt and thorough. Mr Sean Wilson was Chief Inspector of Operations at the MPS for 2009 but has subsequently moved to the Operations Support role. I would like to say a big thank you to all the officers that we have had dealings with and for their continued willingness to engage fully and transparently us.

In closing I would like to give my thanks to the entire panel. Their commitment and service brings reassurance to the communities of Camden that people detained in police stations are treated well and their rights and entitlements are not overlooked in what is a stressful and difficult environment. Of the panel I would like to give particular thanks to my Co-Vice Chairs Joe Aikins and Laura Sarkis who have been willing to give up extra time to serve the panel. Finally, I would like to give thanks to Tony Hawker, our ICV Coordinator, for the work he does with the panel.

**Suzanne Idehen, Panel Chair.**

# Visits to police stations

During 2009 the numbers of detainees held in Camden facilities were as follows:

- MPS sites 10,616 (Holborn – 5,196; Kentish Town – 4,136; Albany Street – 80)
- BTP Tottenham Court Road – 4,182

## Number of visits

The panel averaged nearly 78% of their planned visits to the two 24/7 MPS custody suites and over 82% of their visits to the BTP Tottenham Court Road suite during 2009. The visits were mainly conducted between 12 midday and 6pm (63), with 42 being undertaken after 6pm. The earliest visit was made at 8:52am and the latest at 8:39pm. The majority of visits were made on Wednesdays (35) and the minimum at weekends (3 Sunday, 4 Saturday)

## Detainee concerns

There have been few major concerns voiced by detainees interviewed during 2009. Of all detainees who accepted a visit, 149 (MPS) and 68 (BTP) had no complaints about their treatment while detained. The main issues/requests most reported by detainees and resolved by ICVs were: requests for food and drink 15 (MPS), 5 (BTP); requests for a solicitor – 13 (MPS), 2 (BTP); information on the progress of the detainees case – 9 (MPS), 2 (BTP); someone informed of detainee's detention/request for phone call – 12 (MPS), 6 (BTP); requests for an FME/Health concerns – 14 (MPS), 6 (BTP); the need for a blanket – 7 (MPS), 1 (BTP). The majority of these or other concerns raised by detainees were resolved to the satisfaction of the ICVs at the time of the visit and no further action was required.

## Matters requiring a Police response

The majority of matters requiring a police response to the panel (i.e. those listed on part 1 of the visit report form) concerned the following. Concerns voiced by ICVs on the built infrastructure and equipment such as cells out of action, buzzers or the entry phones not functioning properly. The FME service: delays in detainees being seen and the FME room being not maintained properly e.g. doors or cupboards unlocked. Also, concerns about the health of individual detainees generated requests for responses. The type of food stocked (i.e. halal etc), the stock of foods and the expiry date of ambient foods were noted. The coldness of some cells and the supply of blankets were raised as concerns on several occasions. There were also questions asked by ICVs about police policy on aspects of custody. Of all visit report forms 53 (MPS) 39 (BTP) had no matters requiring a response

# Data from panel visits

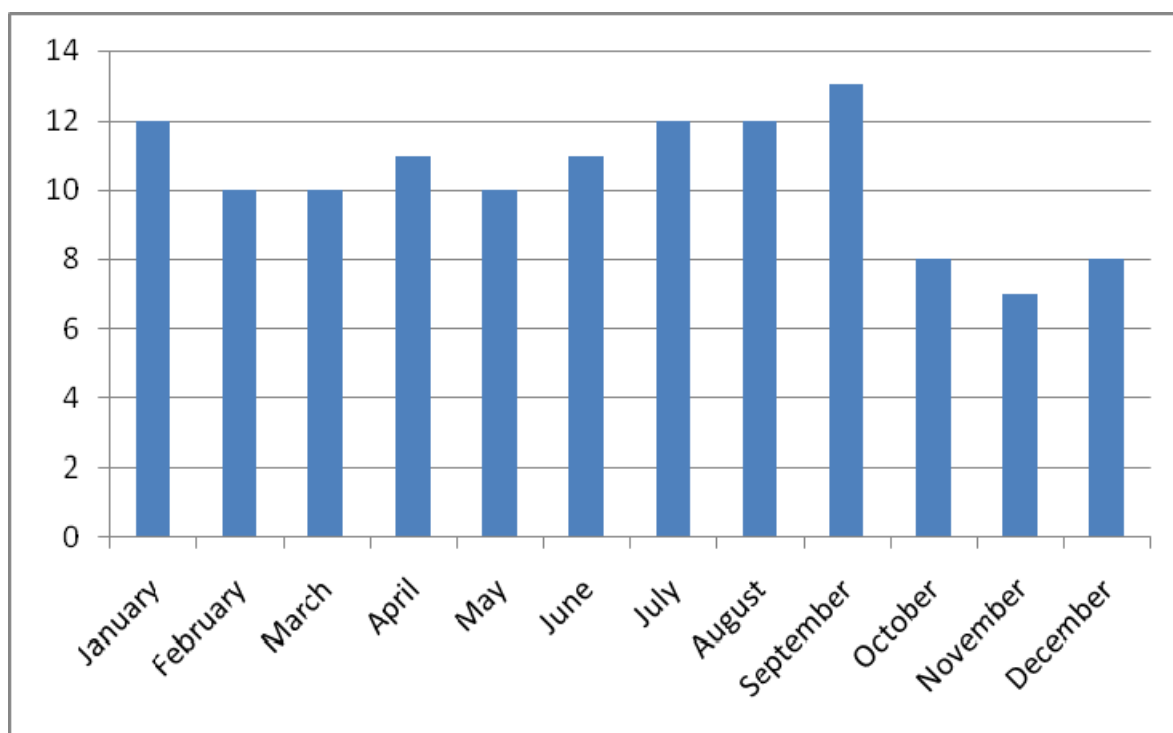
## 1. Number of Visits (All Stations):

Station Annual no. of visits % of annual target

<b>MPS</b>		
Holborn (inc W/E Central x3)	39	75%
Kentish Town	42	80.8%
Albany Street (Overflow)	0	-
<b>BTP</b>		
Tottenham Court Road	43	82.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>-</b>

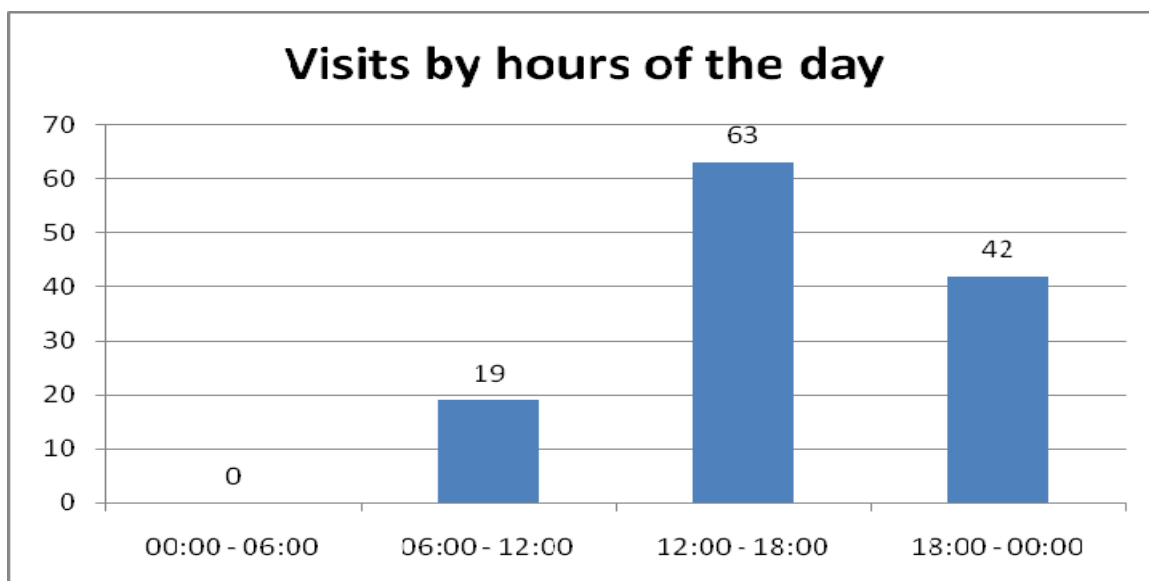
## 2. Breakdown by month of visits undertaken in London borough of Camden during 2008:

<b>MPS</b>	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Holborn	4	4	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	2	1	3
Kentish Town	5	2	3	3	4	3	5	4	5	3	3	2
<b>Total MPS</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>BTP</b>												
Tottenham Ct Rd	3	4	4	5	3	4	3	4	4	3	3	3
<b>Total visits</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>

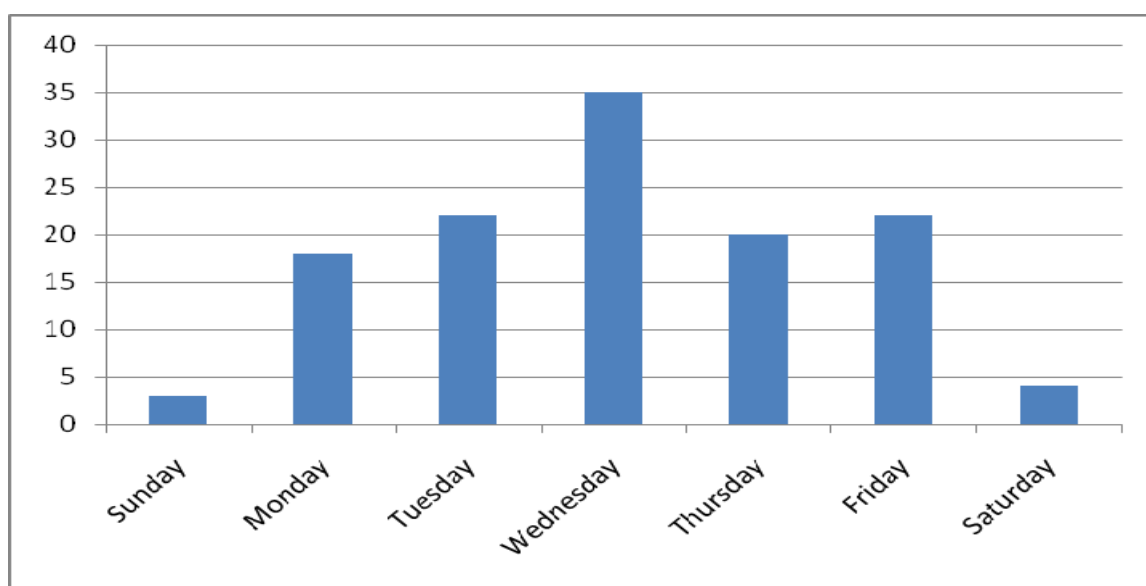




### 3. Time of Visits (MPS only)



### 4. Days of Visits. Annual number on each day of the week.



Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
3	18	22	35	20	22	4

### 5. Details of Visits - Detainees

#### MPS Stations

Total in custody	Offered a visit	Accepted a visit	Refused a visit
400	308	244	64

	Adult	Juvenile	Total
Male	320	41	361
Female	37	2	39
<b>Total</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>400</b>

**Detainee by type MPS**

<b>PACE</b>	<b>Immigration</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total</b>
375	11	14	400

**BTP Tottenham Ct Rd Station**

<b>Total in custody</b>	<b>Offered a visit</b>	<b>Accepted a visit</b>	<b>Refused a visit</b>
169	126	104	22

	<b>Adult</b>	<b>Juvenile</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Male</b>	137	8	145
<b>Female</b>	20	4	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>169</b>

**Detainee by type BTP**

<b>PACE</b>	<b>Immigration</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total</b>
140	24	5	169

# Plans for forthcoming year 2010

The Panel's aims and objectives for 2010 are as follows:

- To make a total of 156 visits to the three custody suites in the borough, and make additional visits to overflow sites where necessary.
- To vary the day and time of visits in order to provide a better spread. Firstly, to spread visits evenly over the days of the week with 10% of visits taking place on Saturday and 10% on Sunday. And secondly, to ensure that a minimum of 10% of visits are carried out between 20:00 and 04:00.
- 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.
- 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 and independently, 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 age, gender and ethnic diversity of the Borough of Camden.
- To continue to actively support improvements in custody including improvements to the built infrastructure such a purpose-built custody facility in Camden.