

# Ealing Independent Custody Visitors Panel

## Annual Report 2009

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## Introduction

### **Welcome to the annual report of the Ealing Independent Custody Visiting Panel covering the calendar year January to December 2009.**

The purpose of the report is to:

- Evaluate the panel's performance
- Provide the local community and the MPA with information about the panels activities and visits made
- 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 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 Ealing, 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 Ealing 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 achieved by

- Making a total of 104 visits. One visit per week to both of the borough's 24/7 custody suites, 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.

The panel achieved over 95% of their scheduled visits to the two custody suites during 2009 plus additional visits at the request of the Custody Inspector – a testament to the dedication of the Ealing ICVs.

Visits are reasonably well spread throughout the week though there remains a tendency to visit during the second half of the weekend and at weekends. Once again the Panel has conducted, though only just, at least one visit in every time slot, thereby providing a 'snapshot' of conditions in Ealing custody suites at all hours. The times of visits are reasonably spread, although almost 75% of the visits take place during the afternoon and evening.

As last year most visits take between 20 and 70 minutes to conduct. This remains encouraging as it indicates that even when custody suites are busy – Acton frequently has 10 to 20 detainees – ICVs are embracing the 'snapshot' principle and prioritising which detainees they choose to interview.

Of those in detention who were offered a visit approx 88% were either spoken to or had visual checks carried out. Over 80% of those seen were held under PACE and the % of immigration detainees remains small, as last year,

Though there continues, as always, to be concern over the number of detainees with suspected mental health issues, few specific concerns over detainee treatment were noted.

Ealing ICV panel meetings continued to be well attended and most members appear to feel comfortable raising issues or asking questions. The panel has embraced the idea of continuous learning with brief training modules delivered at the panel meetings. The panel continue to build on the professional relationship with the Custody officers which it has worked very hard to cultivate in recent years.

The panel is well represented at training sessions, chairs and other meetings and is always represented at the Ealing Community Police Consultative Group

## **Chair's Report**

During the past year, the Panel's membership was static with very few resignations. As there was a waiting list, these positions were immediately filled and the Panel retained its full quota.

The new members, together with existing Panel members, continued to strengthen the excellent and positive relationship with the custody sergeants and staff at Acton and Southall police stations.

Custody Inspector Davies's confidence in custody visitors was so positive in that she felt able to approach the Panel to request additional visits as a result of police

operations or major events, such as the Acton Carnival, took place and this resulted in additional visits over and above the weekly visit.

As with the previous year, there were almost no incidences of negative treatment in both custody suites. The main complaints from custody staff and detainees were to do with the heating/air-conditioning system at both custody suites which played, particularly when it was too cold or too hot resulting in engineers being called out on a regular basis. The other complaint had to do with the change in the FME system – due to the way the system had been set out it often resulted in long waiting times, particularly at Southall, for doctors to attend detainees.

The Panel were approached by the Ealing Community Police Consultative Group to give a presentation at the September meeting, which was very positive. Stephen Gennari, Dilip Jethwa, Inga Sinigaglia, Joan Towers-Perkins and Inspector Davies spoke very eloquently of the work of independent custody visitors. The chair presented the annual report. The presentation was very well received by the meeting and resulted in the Somali community approaching the Panel to give a presentation to their community in the future.

In conclusion, once again, the chair would like to thank all Panel members for their fantastic support over the past year as well as our coordinator, Mike Dodsworth. All members of the Ealing Panel have contributed towards its success as through everyone's efforts, dedication and support to the Panel and, more importantly, the detainees, very few visits were not undertaken in 2009.

## **Recruitment and membership**

At the beginning of 2009 membership of the Ealing panel was at the optimum number required to fulfil its visiting responsibilities in line with the guidance on frequency of visits in the London ICV handbook. Recruitment continued gradually and successfully throughout the year. Thus, despite some losses, by the end of the year the panel membership was very resilient and this was reflected in their excellent performance figures.

As well as having sufficient numbers of members, 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. In June 2008 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 census figures and projections, no applicant was denied access to membership of the Ealing panel on the basis of status as documented in their diversity response. This remains the case.

## **Members of the Ealing ICV Panel in 2009**

**Jeannine Andre (Chair)**

**Dilip Jethwa (Vice Chair)**

**John Blake** (transferred from Hounslow)

**Keiron Coogan**

**Mike Cox**

**Teresa Dalmeda-Fisher**

**Christine Dobbie**

**Stephen Gennari**

**Derek Goss**

**Anastasia Griffith**

**George Maxwell**

**Sue Parrott**

**Deborah Price**

**Narinder Sidhu**

**Inga Sinigaglia**

**Murtaza Shibli**

**Deepa Solanki**

**Sally Wright**

### **Members who resigned or retired in 2009**

Ashley McMahan

Faizal Abubaker

Kamoru John Atiko

Joan Towers-Perkins

## 2009 Data from panel visits to police stations

*Figures have been validated where possible but are subject to receipt of and anomalies within report forms. Detainees are assumed to be PACE and assumed to be 'seen' where such info is missing.*

### 1. Number of Visits

Station	No. of visits 2009	2008
Acton open 52 weeks	54	50
Southall open 52 weeks	51	51
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	101

### 2. Visit times

Time slots	No. of visits 2009	2008
0000 – 0600 hrs	1	5
0600 – 1200 hrs	29	24
1200 – 1800 hrs	45	30
1800 – 0000 hrs	30	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	101

### 3. Visits Days

Days	No. of visits 2009	2008
Monday	1	10
Tuesday	10	14
Wednesday	17	6
Thursday	16	13
Friday	20	16
Saturday	22	18
Sunday	19	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	101

### 4. Visit and detainee details June – December 2009\*

Total number of detainees at visits inc those out of cell or in interview etc	<b>436</b>	
Nos seen	<b>137</b>	
Nos refused	<b>18</b>	
PACE detainees	<b>229</b>	
Immigration detainees	<b>14</b>	
Other	<b>9</b>	
Home Office	<b>3</b>	
Male	<b>235</b>	
Female	<b>20</b>	
Adult	<b>234</b>	
Juvenile	<b>21</b>	

\*A new database was introduced wef 01.06.09, unfortunately at time of publication not all the information for the preceding period 01.01.09 – 31.05.09 was available.

## **Aims and plans for 2010**

As the principle aim of custody visiting alters little over the years – the building and maintaining of confidence between the community and its police service – so the Panel's aims and objectives are likely to change little year on year. The aim persists to continue to provide a professional custody visiting service, maintain performance and illustrate to the people of Ealing that should they, or their family members, find themselves in police custody in Ealing they can be assured that members of their community take an interest in their wellbeing. To those ends the plans for 2010 are as follows:

- To continue to ensure that the rights, entitlements and interests of detainees are upheld and to raise concerns promptly and effectively with local police or the MPA as appropriate.
- To make a total of 104 visits to the Ealing custody suites plus any extra visits considered necessary as a result of special circumstances. To visit stations where Ealing detainees may be accommodated should the Ealing suites be closed.
- To vary the time of visits in order to provide a better spread and in particular to ensure that at least one visit is conducted at every time slot listed in the data section.
- 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 Ealing community
- To ensure that all new recruits receive local and MPA training. To encourage continuous learning through panel discussion, ongoing learning modules and refresher training sessions.
- To engage with other panels when practicable, through the London ICV Conference and shared training and resources as appropriate.
- To attend and report to the Ealing 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 Ealing.
- Together with the MPA, to continue to promote and raise awareness of the work of Independent Custody Visitors.