

# Greenwich Independent Custody Visitors Panel

**Annual Report  
2009**

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# Introduction

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

The report covers the 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 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 Greenwich, 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.

## 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 following specific aims and objectives were set out for 2009:

To make a total of 52 visits to Plumstead custody suite and occasional visits to Greenwich when in use.

To vary the days of the week on which visits are made.

To vary the times of visits in order to provide a better distribution of visits over 24 hours, particularly between the hours of 20:00-07:59.

To improve the level of communication and engagement with Greenwich police.

To continue to ensure that the rights and interests of detainees are upheld. To raise concerns promptly and effectively with the local police or the MPA as appropriate and to challenge where 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, 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 diversity of the London Borough of Greenwich across all strands.

To investigate new initiatives designed to target different types of people and increase the take up of the ICV role.

The panel made a total of 37 visits throughout 2009 to police stations in the borough of Greenwich, a significant improvement on 22 made during 2008. Against a target of 52 visits to be carried out during the year at a rate of one visit per week, this represented an achievement of 71% of the annual target, up from 42% the previous year.

It is also worth noting the comparison with 2007, when the Panel was experiencing various problems, notably the shortfall of volunteers, and their total number of visits carried out then was only 10. However, the panel has unfortunately again failed to satisfy the visit target of +90% and will need to improve significantly again in 2010.

The distribution of visits throughout the week is relatively good with at least one visit taking place on every day of the week. More visits still need to take place between Saturday and Tuesday for an even better spread, but overall the trend is good.

The distribution of visits throughout the day is generally satisfactory with the majority of visits occurring between the hours of 06:00-20:00, a good time range. Unfortunately no visits occurred between 00.00 -06.00 which is a concern and will need to be addressed during 2010.

It appears that achievement of the visit target has again been hindered as a result of insufficient advance planning of visits and lack of necessary arrangements to seek a replacement when unable to conduct a rota visit. This issue must be addressed by members if the improvement in performance to reach the required target is to be

achieved. However Panel membership finally stabilised around the required levels during the year with successful recruitment bringing enthusiastic new members. This will stand the panel in good stead in the coming year.

General relations and communication with the police continued to improve throughout 2009, reflecting the positive trend since 2007. Officers are now attending panel meetings and there is an effective communication link between ICVs and the MPS through the MPA. Again it is with particular thanks to Inspector Steve Connor and Sergeant Martin Lockwood that positive engagement with the police and custody staff has been made possible and continues to strengthen.

In the majority of cases, there were no significant issues raised in respect of detainees. However, as before, there are some recurring concerns relating to cleanliness of the shower and wash areas and storage of items in corridors.

## **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, faiths, races, genders, sexualities, abilities and age on the panel.

Greenwich started 2009 with 10 members and then successfully recruited a further three, although one member resigned. The panel was, and remains, finally at the required strength to concentrate on improved visiting performance.

The panel welcomes applications from all sections of the community in line with stated policy. It is hoped that future recruitment will result in an increased number younger people. New initiatives will be needed both to target different types of people and to increase the take up of the role.

## **Visits to police stations**

The panel makes weekly, unannounced visits to Plumstead police station, the principal custody suite within the borough, and on occasion to the 'overflow' suite at Greenwich when it is known the station is being used.

The majority of visit reports have not raised any significant issues that required the attention of the MPA or which required a response from the local police. As in previous years some 'housekeeping' issues regularly raise comment eg:

- detainee's access to showers and washing facilities.
- the issuing of blankets to detainees
- temporary storage of items in corridors and shower areas.

Fortunately no significant issues have been raised in 2009 that have required intervention and ICVs have been well received and accommodated by Custody Staff on their visits.

## **Panel Membership 2009**

**Brian Haq (Chair)**

**Harry Denford**

**Jo Harper**

**Errol Lawrence**

**Tony Maduagwu**

**Chidi Nweke**

**Gabriel Ojo**

**James Sewell**

**Jean Willmott (Vice Chair)**

### **New members**

**Claudette Lawrence**

**Bali Mahil**

**Linda Donnelly**

### **Members who resigned or retired**

**Saiqa Barlas**

# Data from panel visits

*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.*

## Number of Visits

Station	2009	2008
Plumstead	37	22
<b>Total 52</b>	<b>(71%)</b>	<b>(42.3%)</b>

## Visit times

Time slots	2009	2008
0000 – 0600 hrs	0	3
0600 – 1200 hrs	12	5
1200 – 1800 hrs	10	12
1800 – 0000 hrs	15	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>22</b>

## Visits Days

Days	2009	2008
Monday	2	1
Tuesday	3	3
Wednesday	8	6
Thursday	6	3
Friday	10	6
Saturday	6	1
Sunday	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>22</b>

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

Total number of detainees at visits inc .those out of cell or in interview etc	<b>216</b>
Nos . seen	<b>57</b>
Nos. Refused	<b>5</b>
PACE detainees	<b>66</b>
Immigration detainees	<b>2</b>
Other	
Home Office	
Male	<b>62</b>
Female	<b>6</b>
Adult	<b>61</b>
Juvenile	<b>7</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.

# Plans for forthcoming year 2010

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

To make a total of 52 visits to Plumstead custody suite and occasional visits to Greenwich when in use.

To vary the days of the week on which visits are made and to ensure visits are carried out on every day of the week over the year.

To vary the times of visits in order to provide a better distribution of visits over 24 hours, particularly between the hours of 20:00-03:59.

To improve the level of communication and engagement with Greenwich police.

To continue to ensure that the rights and interests of detainees are upheld. To raise concerns promptly and effectively with the local police or the MPA as appropriate and to challenge where 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, 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 diversity of the London Borough of Greenwich across all strands.

To investigate new initiatives designed to target different types of people and increase the take up of the ICV role.