

Hackney Independent Custody Visitors Panel

Annual Report 2009

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Introduction

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

The report covers the period from January 2009 to December 2009

The purpose of this 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 Commanders, 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.

Chair's Report

At the outset, I would like to extend my grateful thanks to all members of the Hackney ICV Panel, including some who left during the course of the past year, together with the four stalwarts from neighbouring Tower Hamlets who helped us out on several occasions, for giving generously of their time and expertise in making our custody visits scheme work well.

Our panel currently has 16 members representing Hackney's diverse population, with one, Cleo Sylvestre, on sabbatical leave. All our members have undergone initial training and the panel collectively did a refresher training exercise at its October meeting. Mary Pimm attended the annual ICVA Conference at Nottingham in November, and was able to bring back to the panel useful training tips, particularly on health and safety issues, to improve our visits practice. Panel members continue to represent Hackney at the ICV Chairs Meetings and Hackney Custody User Group meetings.

Our thanks to Caroline Saunders, under whose time as Custody Manager custody practice at Stoke Newington improved greatly. We welcome the proactive and helpful approach of her successor, Dan Wakeford, and look forward to developing a close working relationship with him in the coming year.

Over the past year we have seen genuine improvements in the way detainees are treated whilst in police detention. A majority of ICV visits no longer require referral to the panel. But there is no room for complacency as problems still occur over the provision of food and drink, access to solicitors, hygiene issues and FME support. During the year, the total unfamiliarity of some custody staff and front desk staff with the ICV scheme has caused problems, though with Inspector Wakeford's assistance we believe this will be resolved in the year ahead.

Throughout this year our panel has been well supported, during a difficult time of change in the MPA, by our co-ordinator Tony Hawker, and our thanks go to him for all his hard work.

Towards the end of the year we learnt that, due to an MPA restructuring programme and consequent staffing cuts, our panel meetings would be curtailed with effect from 1 January 2010 from their normal 6-weekly frequency to quarterly. We shall need to monitor the impact of this change carefully in the coming months. Hopefully we shall be able to build on our achievements this year and continue to ensure that detainees' welfare is a priority in Hackney's custody suites.

Mary Pimm
ICV Co-Chair

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 Hackney panel are required to make weekly unannounced visits to Stoke Newington and Shoreditch. In addition visits may be made to Hackney Police Station when it is used in special operations.

- To make a total of 52 visits over the year at a rate of 1 visit per week to both Stoke Newington and Shoreditch Police Stations.
- To maintain the even distribution of visits across the week.
- To achieve a more even distribution of the times of visits across the 24 hour period, to include occasional visits between 21:00 & 24:00 and between 06:00 & 09:00.
- To build and maintain panel membership at a minimum of 17 volunteers.
- To maintain and improve upon the level of communication with Hackney police, the custody manager during panel meetings, custody staff during visits, other Hackney custody users and other ICV panels.
- 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.
- To run a brief series of short (1-2 hour) refresher training courses for the Hackney Panel.
- 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 Hackney 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 86 visits throughout 2009 to Hackney police stations. Against a target of 104 visits to be carried out during the year at a rate of one visit per week to each station, this represents an achievement of 84% of the annual target. There was one visit undertaken at 5:17 and only one after 20:00. 31 visits were made between 18:00 and 20:00 which was the period of the highest density of visits.

Recruitment and Retention

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.

Recent diversity monitoring has been undertaken giving the opportunity of comparing each of the London panels against the diversity of their boroughs. However, because the monitoring is only complete for two thirds of the Hackney panel it is not possible to give an accurate statistical picture on ethnicity and how the panel compares with the borough profile. The only information that can be given is on age and gender. The population of the borough as a whole is 49% male, 51% female; Hackney ICV Panel over the year has had 7 male members and 12 female members so the panel does not accurately represent the borough in terms of gender. The spread of ages are: 21% in the 16-29 age group against the borough average of 21%; 46% in 30-44 age group against the borough average of 27.5%; and 33% in the 45-64 age group against the borough average of 20.4%. There were no ICVs on the panel in the 65+ group which is about 11% of the population in Hackney.*. The panel endeavours to be broadly representative of Hackney and has the appearance of matching the borough profile to some degree.

The following Hackney members undertook visits for the panel during 2009.

Shabnum Hassan, Co-Chair
Mary Pimm, Co-Chair
Christina Jordean, Vice Chair
Mohammed Hafesji
John Dixon
Steven Oram
Niahra Allen
Carolyn Hillery
Melanie Norton
Samantha Bryant
Alison Murdoch
Cleo Palmer
Prince Balwah
Osaro Aiyeola
Olakunle Omowumi
Bethan Taylor

Resigned during 2009

Ibrahim Incedal – last visit 02/06/09
Deirdre Coward – last visit 06/09/09
Huseyin Tekdemir – last visit 24/10/09

Tower Hamlets members who visited with the Hackney Panel during 2009:

Peter Tihanyi
Madeleine Craggs
Suzette Barry
Jane Fothergill

*based on projections 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.

Visits to Police Stations

There are two 24/7 custody suites in the borough of Hackney; the panel makes weekly, unannounced visits to Stoke Newington and Shoreditch stations.

Detainee Concerns

Of the 437 detainees who were asked if they wished to speak to Hackney ICVs, 160 refused the visit. Of those who accepted (277), 216 had no complaints at all. Of those who had concerns regarding their rights, 18 were regarding requests for legal advice, 26 detainees wanted a telephone call/relative informed of their detention. 19 detainees spoke to ICVs about medical needs. The remainder were requests for food and drink (20) and other requests such as blankets and washing/toilet facilities (17). Some detainees had more than one issue. Most detainee concerns were resolved by the visiting ICVs at the time of the visit.

Matters requiring a police response

The majority of the visit report forms (54) did not have any matters requiring a police response. Those that did fell into the following categories:

- Requests by ICVs for clarification on police custody policy
- Legal, detainees not receiving their rights such as access to a solicitor or an appropriate adult
- Problems with the FME service, detainees claiming to have not received timely medical attention. General health issues revealed to the ICVs by detainees.
- Officers not understanding the role of ICVs. ICVs kept waiting for entry to the custody suite.
- General welfare of detainees such as; access to showers and washing facilities, provision of food and special diet food; cold and the provision of blankets.
- Delay with detainees receiving food and drink
- General problems in the custody suite such as tidiness, hygiene and supply of blankets for detainees.

The relationship with custody staff has continued to be positive and panel meetings have been well attended by the Custody Manager.

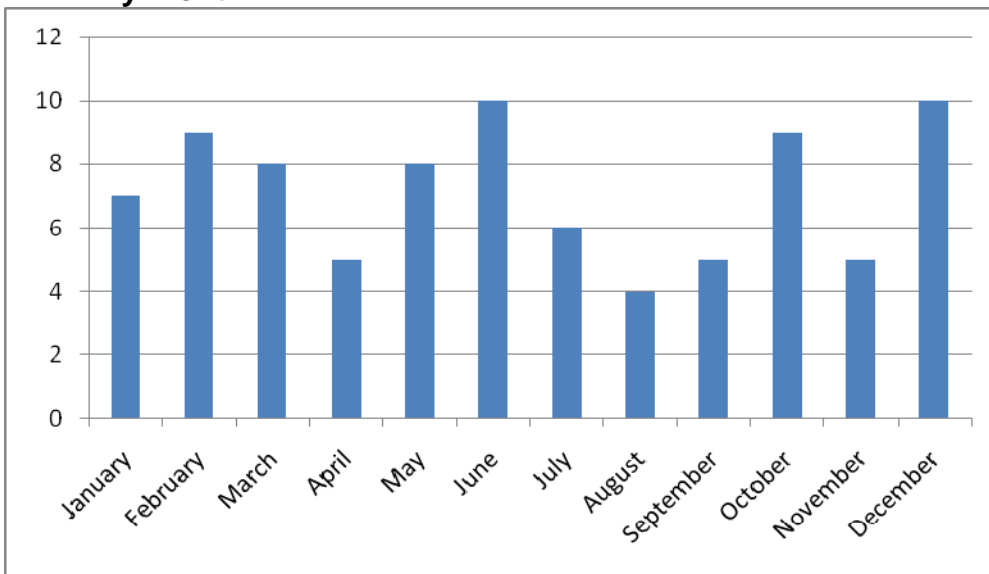
Data from Panel Visits

1. Number of Visits

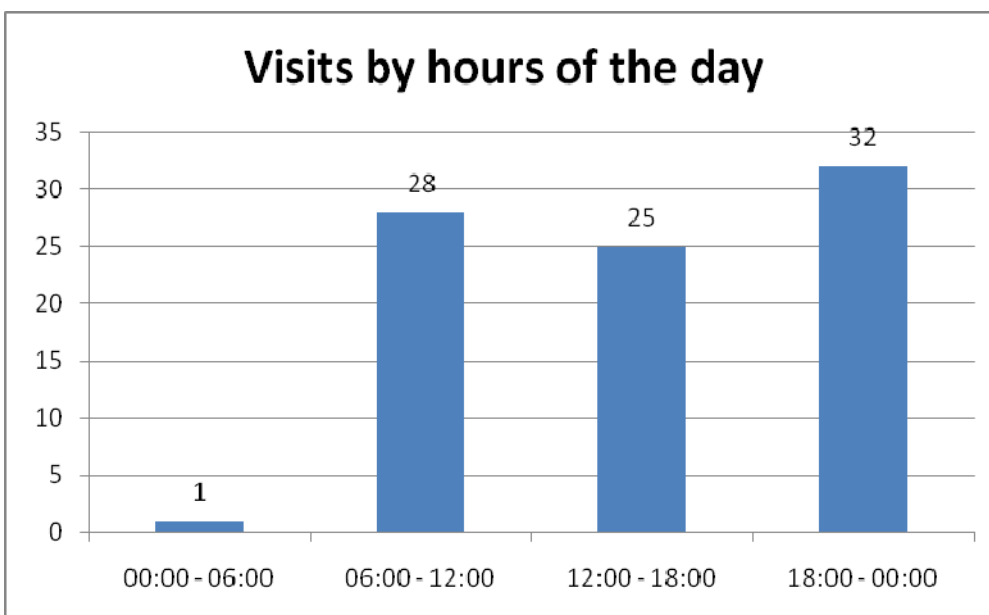
Station	Annual no. of visits	% of Annual Target*
Stoke Newington	42	-
Shoreditch	42	-
Hackney	2	-
Total	86	84%

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

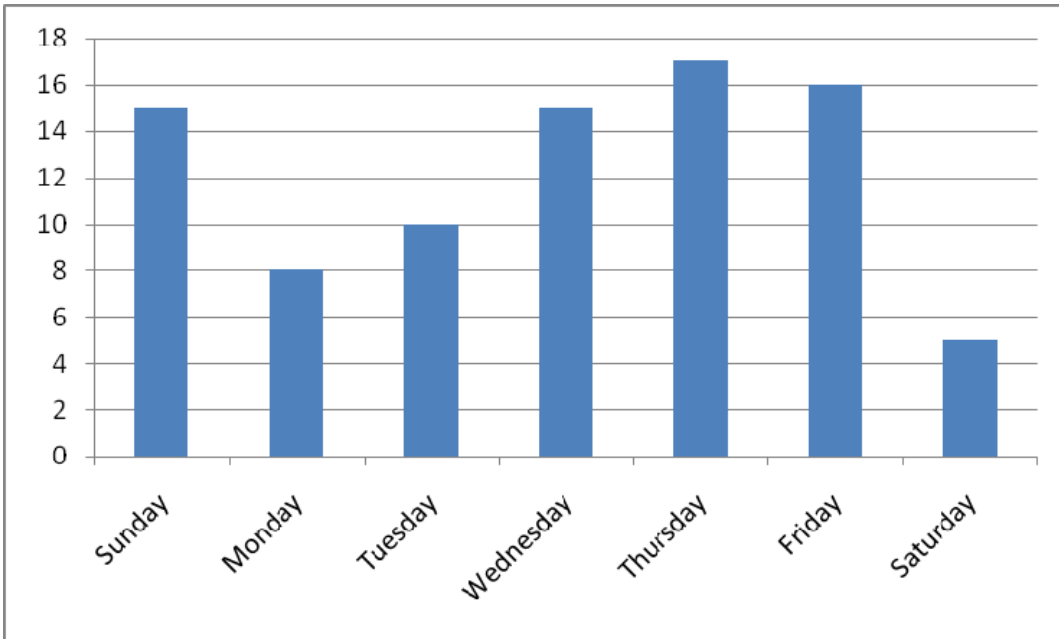
2. By month



3. By hours of the day



By days of the week



Breakdown of detainees at the time of the visits

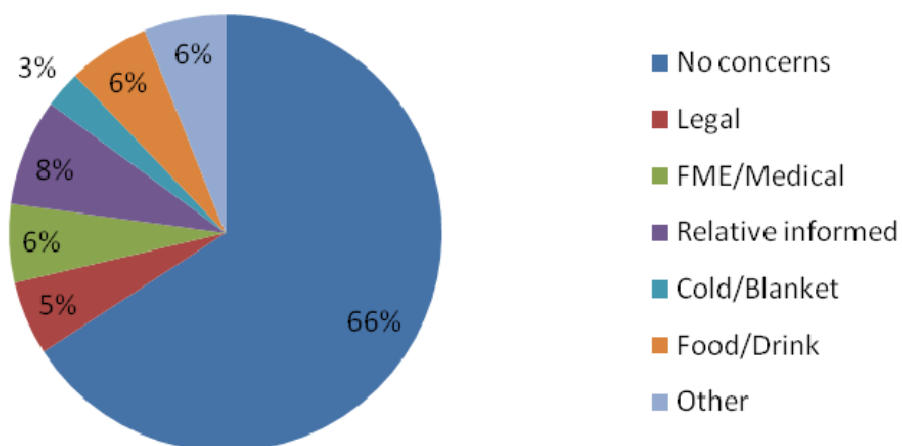
Total in custody	Offered a visit	Accepted a visit	Refused a visit
507	437	277	160

	Adult	Juvenile	Total
Male	416	33	449
Female	56	2	58
Total	472	35	507

Detainee by type

PACE	Immigration	Other	Total
468	26	13	507

Detainee concerns expressed to ICVs



Plans for Forthcoming Year 2010

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