

Haringey Independent Custody Visitors Panel

Annual Report 2009

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Introduction

Welcome to the annual report of the Haringey 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 2009.

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.

Chairperson's Report

This is Haringey Independent Custody Visitors Panel 21st annual report.

This report is produced to provide the community of Haringey, which we serve, and the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) under whose authority we act, with an insight of how the panel performed over the year and to note the issues that have arisen. It is circulated within the community in order to increase the understanding and awareness of the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme and the service for the community that we perform.

In general, we found that detainees were treated satisfactorily within the provisions of the law and that the police in Haringey demonstrate high standards of professionalism and commitment in their work. Many detainees have in fact praised the custody staff for the high standard of care shown towards them. However, the panel is aware of the dangers of becoming complacent and remains vigilant in ensuring that the Police & Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) is always adhered to.

There seems to be time delays around interpreters and Appropriate Adults arriving in custody, which often leads to delays in processing detainees. We are still seeing immigration detainees being held in custody for periods of up to 5 days, a purpose for which Police cells were not designed for and are entirely unsuited, however, we have noticed a decrease in this over the last year. The cultural and religious needs of the detainees has improved significantly, items such as prayer mats and kosher meals readily available within custody. A recent Custody Directorate visit to the Borough's custody suites was extremely positive. It mentioned good practices with the bail management system, successful interventions and also the way in which the daily & weekly custody checks are carried out.

Overall, the police work hard to facilitate our visits and any requirements we have during these times, despite often being under pressure from the increasing demands of the custody suite. Most issues involving individual detainees were resolved either with the Custody Sergeant during the visit or with the Custody Support Manager, Sergeant Ian Millar at our six weekly panel meetings. I would like to thank Ian Millar for all the support he has given the panel by investigating our concerns, answering questions at panel meetings, bringing key speakers to our panel meetings. His dedication to our panel has been greatly appreciated and invaluable.

As Chair, I have attended and represented the panel at the Independent Advisory Group meetings and I am also a board member at the Haringey Police Community Consultative Group, both of these giving me a bigger forum through which the panel can communicate its activities to the wider community of Haringey. I have also attended meetings at the MPA which have included diversity training, cluster meetings, chair's meetings.

Haringey ranks as London's fourth most diverse borough, based on the Office for National Statistics Diversity index, therefore, we also try hard to reflect in the panel the diversity within the borough and I am pleased to say that the ICV's represent a good cross-section of the borough's population.

As always during the year we were sad to see some of our long-standing, established panel member's leave. Their departure was, for the most part, for personal reasons such as moving out of the area, changing jobs or being no longer able to make the time commitment to be an Independent Custody Visitor. We thank them all for their work whilst members of our panel.

As Chair, I would like to give my personal thanks to my Co-Vice Chairs Diane McCready & Natascha Franklin for the overwhelming dedication, support and commitment they have both given to myself and the rest of the panel. I would also like to thank all the panel members who have given up their free time to ensure that all stations are visited on a weekly basis. Without their enthusiasm and their serious dedication to custody visiting, we would not have achieved our goals. I would also like to thank one of our oldest and most dedicated panel members Sam Blackett. He has been a ICV for over 10 years and despite ill health has always conducted his visits and attended panel meetings. His dedication is admirable.

Sandra Gouveia, March 2010

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 panel makes visits to the two '24/7' stations: Tottenham, and Hornsey and also the overflow station at Wood Green.

In the previous annual report the following specific aims and objectives were set out for 2009. The panel had success in endeavouring to meet these objectives and in so doing continued to ensure that the rights and interests of detainees were upheld. To raise concerns promptly and effectively with the local police or the MPA as appropriate and to challenge where appropriate.

To the '24/7' stations Hornsey and Tottenham the panel completed 96 of its 104 scheduled visits (92%*) – 47 to Hornsey (90%) and 45 to Tottenham (86%) and 4 to Wood Green. The panel visited Wood Green, the panel overflow suite, on 28 occasions. On only one occasion were detainees being held there at the time of the visit but the panel checked the facilities on other occasions and for the purpose of statistics four visits are included in the overall station visit figures*.

The panel made a total of 120 visits throughout 2009 to Haringey police stations. Visits were reasonably well spread out through the week, only Mondays, Saturdays and Sundays receiving notably fewer visits than other days of the week.

The distribution of times of visits (24/7 stations) were good with 31 visits taking place between 06:00 and 12:00; 54 visits between 12:00 and 18:00 and 35 visits between 18:00 and 00:00. The earliest visit was 08:30 and the latest undertaken at 22:06.

The panel enjoyed excellent relations with the borough police and were confident that the rights and interests of detainees were ensured. The panel Chair and Co Vice Chairs maintained a presence on the Haringey CPCG group and attended MPA meetings on behalf of the panel when required.

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.

The Haringey panel has always striven to reflect Haringey's diverse communities in its membership and has endeavoured to recruit accordingly. The MPA has conducted a diversity monitoring exercise but the Haringey panel is not fully covered, with statistics only available for two thirds of the members. This means that it is not possible to publish statistics on ethnicity.

The breakdown of men to women in the borough is approximately even with marginally more women 51% to 49% men. The panel did approach this at times. During the year the panel membership included 8 male and 12 female volunteers. However, at the end of the year there were 5 male (33%) and 10 female (66%) ICV*.

In terms of age, over the year the breakdown was as follows. Ages 18-30, 5 members; 31-45, 10 members; 46-60, 3 members; 2 panel members were over 60 years old. At the end of the year the breakdown was: 18-30 years - two; 31-45 - eight; 46-60 - three; over 60 - two.

The recruited and accredited members who visited during 2009 were:

Noel Barrett	Diane McCready, Co-Vice Chair
Harold Blackett	Ahmet Mehmet
Carol Brown	Carey Miller
Rose Bruce	Mellissa Morland
Ali Cakmakyurdu	Ferhat Salman
Shmuel Davidsohn	Margaret Springer
Natascha Franklin, Co-Vice Chair	Sybil Stair
Sandra Gouveia, Chair	Simon Thomas
Jackie Gunning	Rachel Williams
Nuru Kimazi	Samuel Wynter

The recruited and accredited members of the panel at the end of the year were:

Harold Blackett	Ahmet Mehmet
Carol Brown	Carey Miller
Rose Bruce	Mellissa Morland
Shmuel Davidsohn	Margaret Springer
Natascha Franklin, Co-Vice Chair	Sybil Stair
Sandra Gouveia, Chair	Simon Thomas
Nuru Kimazi	Samuel Wynter
Diane McCready, Co-Vice Chair	

*based on projections derived from the 2001 census 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 three custody suites in the borough of Haringey, these are Tottenham and Hornsey which are fully operational and open 24 hours per day and also Wood Green which is only used when the other 2 stations are full or if there are any special operations taking place within the borough which may create a influx of detainees. A total of 9,540 detainees were held in the borough custody suites during 2009. 532 of these were detained at the times of the visits made by the ICVs.

Of the 214 detainees spoken to during visits 167 had no concerns. The ICVs visiting resolved most of the concerns at the time of their visits. The majority of our reports have not raised many significant issues that required the attention of the MPA. Only 33 of 120 visit report forms had matters requiring a police response to the panel. It is a source of satisfaction to the panel that there have been few, if any, complaints from detainees on how they are treated at any station. However, there have been a few recurring issues upon which responses were sought by the panel.

- The FME service and the condition of the FME room generated most requests for a response. The room was often found to be unlocked, or the cupboards within the room containing medical supplies, including medication and scissors, were found to be unlocked.
- Food for detainees was often raised. This usually concerned the availability of special diet food or the food in store being past or close to its 'use by' date.
- Issues around the cleanliness or tidiness of the suite.
- Damage or non functioning of the infrastructure and cells being out of operation
- The accuracy of entries in NSPIS

ICVs have been well received and accommodated by Custody Staff. Police staff were mentioned in 10 visit report forms. All of the comments were positive and some resulted in emails of commendation to the officer's line manager. The relationship with custody staff has continued to be positive and professional and panel meetings are well attended by members of the Custody Management.

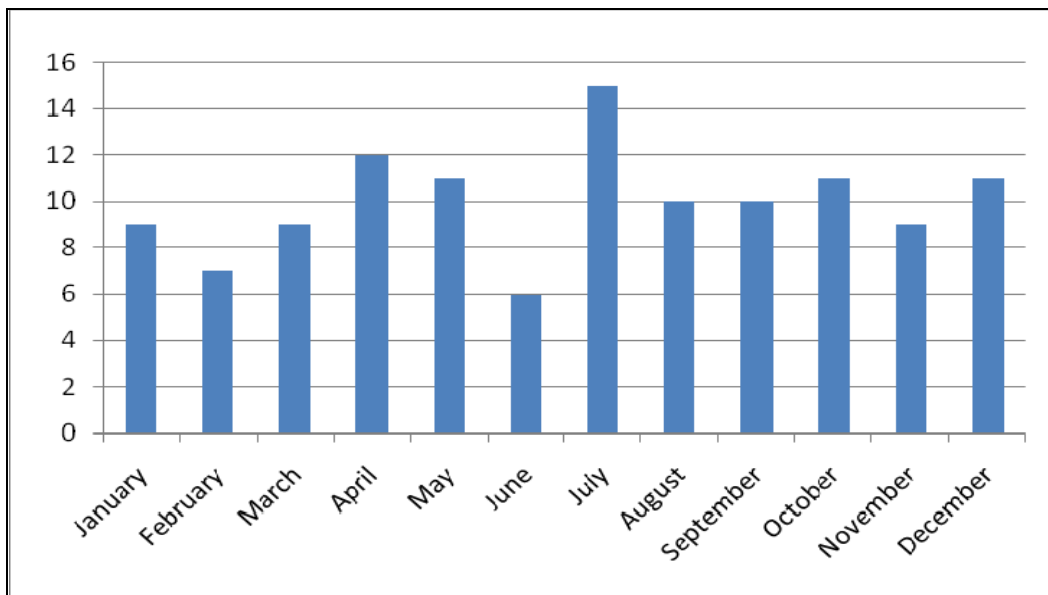
It has been rare for there to be a delay in the granting of access to the custody suite, despite visits being carried out at busy times. It should be noted that only on the grounds of safety should ICVs be prevented from accessing the custody area. There were no significant concerns raised during the year that have not been addressed and dealt with either during a custody visit or through the monthly panel meetings.

Data from Panel Visits

1. Number of Visits

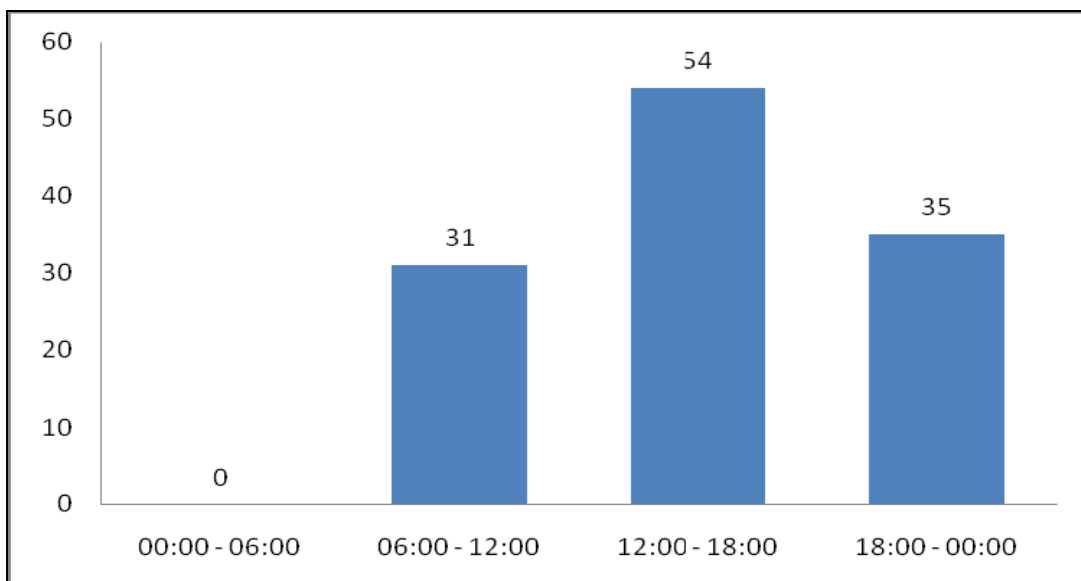
Station	Annual no. of visits	% of Annual Target*
Tottenham	45	86.5%
Hornsey	47	90%
Wood Green	4 (total 28)	N/A
Total Visits	96 (total 120)	92%

*Annual Target is 52 visits per 24/7-custody suite, 104 total.



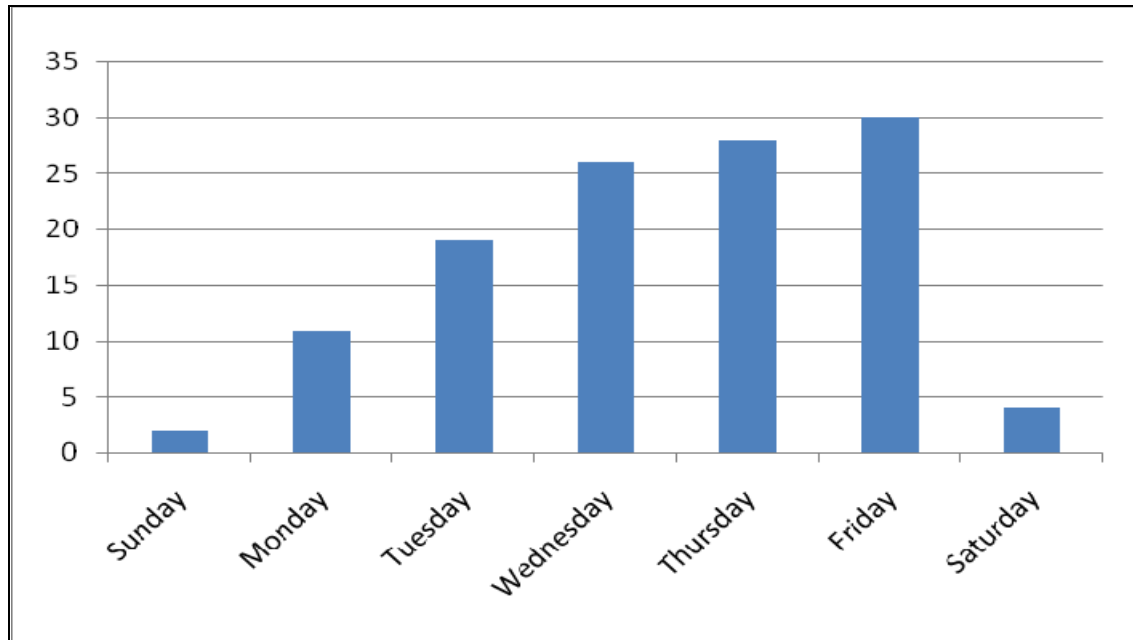
*Based on 120 visits completed

2. Time of Visits



*Based on 120 visits completed

3. Days of Visits



Breakdown of detainees at the time of the visits

Total in custody	Offered a visit	Accepted a visit	Refused a visit
532	306	214	92

	Adult	Juvenile	Total
Male	422	38	460
Female	67	5	72
Total	489	43	532

Detainee by type

PACE	Immigration	Other	Total
488	22	22	532

4. Details of detainees' concerns:

No Complaints	167	Blanket	5
Medical Attention	2	Washing Facilities	14
Request Food/ Drink	4	Toilet Facilities	1
Legal Advice/Consultation	8	Interpreter	3
Relative informed of detention	15	Request telephone Call	2
Appropriate Adult required	1	Dirty cell	2
Other	6		

Plans for Forthcoming Year 2010

Targets:

- To make a total of 52 visits over the year at a rate of one visit per week to both Tottenham and Hornsey stations and also conduct visits where necessary to Wood Green station
- To maintain the excellent distribution of visits across the week.
- To improve the distribution of the times of visits across the 24 hour period, to include visits between 00:00 and 15:59 hours.
- To maintain and improve upon the level of communication with Haringey police, the custody manager during panel meetings and custody staff during visits.
- To maintain and improve communications with other important organisations within the community such as the Haringey Community & Police Consultative Group
- 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 Haringey across all strands.
- To investigate new initiatives designed to target different types of people and increase the take up of the ICV role.