

# Harrow Independent Custody Visitors Panel

**Annual Report  
2009**

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# Introduction

Welcome to the annual report of the Harrow 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 Harrow, 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 Harrow Custody Visiting Panel forms part of the London ICV Scheme. This new reporting arrangement brings Harrow in line with other parts 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 52 visits. One visit per week to the one custody suite in the borough, 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 minimum level of performance set by the Authority is 80% of scheduled visits completed. The panel's 90% performance is a significant achievement and is a considerable improvement on 81% in 2008. Throughout the year the membership showed dedication and commitment in ensuring that wherever possible visits were no longer lost through late notification of non-availability.

Visits were reasonably well spread throughout the week, although weekend visits were rather sparse this year. As last year detainees are still very much more likely to receive a visit in the afternoon or evening than during the early hours or mornings. Approx 61% of all those in detention were either spoken to or visually checked during visits, a rise on last year's 58%. 79% of detainees were held under PACE and at approx 1% the number of immigration detainees is again slightly lower than last year.

Harrow ICV panel meetings remain consistently well attended with the visit workload shared amongst all active members. The panel has embraced the process of ongoing learning through training modules delivered at panel meetings. The relationship with custody staff continues to be excellent and members are kept well informed on custody issues and wider police developments. The panel was represented throughout the year on the Harrow Police and Community Consultative Group (HPCCG).

# Chair's report

As the incoming chair of the HICV Panel, I would like to take this opportunity to formally thank the independent members of the Harrow ICV Panel for their confidence in electing me as the chair for the term 2009 / 2010, and also for their dedication in ensuring their volunteering responsibilities are carried out on time, every time.

Being my first report as the Chair of the panel as previously having served as a vice-chair under the very-able and dedicated past-chair Patrick Hassan-Morlai, I would, on behalf of the Harrow ICV Panel also like to wish him all the best in all he does, and hope he will always remain a key contributing member of this panel.

I would also like to acknowledge the continuous support and co-operation received from the Harrow - Past-Custody Manager, Inspector Alison Darke and extend a welcome to Inspector Dave Burgum (Custody Manager), and his team of proficient custody officers of the South Harrow Police Station.

Indeed, the panel observed that both officers truly acknowledged the relevance of the ICV Scheme and its contributions to better police-community relations in Harrow. As such, the custody team at Harrow have demonstrated a keen awareness of the scheme and this in turn helped in avoiding delays to access the custody; in resolving issues of concern raised during / after visits; and in receiving regular police feedback and representation at every Panel meeting in the borough.

Finally, I'd also like to extend on behalf of the Harrow ICV Panel, our thanks to James Tate & Mike Dodsworth, of the MPA, for their untiring efforts in managing the administrative affairs of the panel, and who continue to do so.

The ICV scheme has undergone a major overhaul commencing January 2010, which was announced by the scheme body under the auspices of the Metropolitan Police Authority, which means the panel meets on less-frequent interval (quarterly) compared to what it previously did (approximately every 6 weeks). The Harrow ICV Panel will have more feedback to report back to the London Borough of Harrow community, in it's next annual report.

As the report itself is very detailed, I would invite readers to pay special attention to the section that deals with Aims, Achievements and Developments. I hope the statistics provided in this section make interesting reading as well to all the readers of this report.

Harrow ICV Panel did not experience any membership or recruitment problems during 2009 as despite the loss of two members through resignation and a further two taking sabbatical absence, there remained a sufficient core of experienced and dedicated Visitors to maintain performance levels. Accordingly no recruitment occurred in 2009 as this was once again not a primary aim for the panel.

The Harrow ICV Panel is now a fully fledged member, with recognised representation in the Harrow Police & Community Consultative Group (HPCCG), one of the tasks which the panel, under it's previous Chair, had set as an objective last year. The Harrow ICV Panel also has assigned a permanent representative to the HPCCG, Ms. Deepa Popat (Vice-Chair, Harrow ICV Panel), who would normally be available at any HPCCG meeting to talk to any community members, failing which, there normally is a member of the Harrow ICV panel present at most meetings.

The Harrow ICV Panel looks forward to 2010 with increased optimism and renewed vigour that its aims and plans will be fully achieved as it has full capacity, a very good working relationship with Harrow Police and permanent representation in the HPCCG.

Signed: Faiz Nazerali – Chair – Harrow ICV Panel - 2009

With assistance from Deepa Popat – Vice-Chair – Harrow ICV Panel - 2009

## Recruitment and Membership

A diverse borough, with over 50% of its population from the BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) communities, Harrow is also the most religiously diverse local authority area in the UK.

During the course of the year two members left the panel, although one was only at the very end of the year. A further two members took continuing sabbatical absence. Membership of the panel commenced with 12 but stood at 8 ICVs at the end of 2009, with 2 members on sabbaticals. However this is still sufficient to service the borough's one custody suite, although its resilience to cover periods of unavailability is reduced. As the optimum number for the panel is 9 it is likely that further recruitment will be required if the two sabbatical members should decide not return. The panel through local publicity and participation in other bodies continues to link with the MPA's London-wide scheme profile raising measures to raise public awareness of, and confidence in, the ICV scheme.

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) were 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 Harrow panel on the basis of their status as documented in their diversity response. Thus despite reduced membership the panel remains, as last year, healthily diverse overall, although the gender balance has become predominately male.

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

**Julia Fraser**

**Michael Fitzgerald**

**Patrick Hassan-Morlai**

**Faiz Nazerali (Chair)**

**Peter Morris**

**Ashok Parmar**

**Deepa Popat (Vice Chair)**

**Abu Saud**

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

**Kathy Twomey**    sabbatical all year  
**Roger St Paul**    sabbatical wef 10.09

**Sohail Anwar**    resigned 07.09  
**Brian Lay**        resigned 12.09

# Data from panel visits to police stations 2009

*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	No. of visits 2009	2008
Harrow	47	42
<b>Total 52</b>	<b>(90%)</b>	<b>(81%)</b>

## Visit times

Time slots	No. of visits 2009	2008
0000 – 0600 hrs	0	0
0600 – 1200 hrs	7	10
1200 – 1800 hrs	10	5
1800 – 0000 hrs	30	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>42</b>

## Visits Days

Days	No. of visits 2009	2008
Monday	8	4
Tuesday	14	7
Wednesday	7	9
Thursday	10	7
Friday	2	4
Saturday	3	10
Sunday	3	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>42</b>

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

Total number of detainees at visits inc .those out of cell or in interview etc	<b>147</b>
Nos . seen	<b>52</b>
Nos. Refused	<b>39</b>
PACE detainees	<b>117</b>
Immigration detainees	<b>2</b>
Other	<b>1</b>
Home Office	<b>1</b>
Male	<b>103</b>
Female	<b>18</b>
Adult	<b>105</b>
Juvenile	<b>16</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

The Panel's aims and objectives 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 52 visits to the Harrow custody suite and any extra visits considered necessary as a result of special circumstances. To visit stations where Harrow detainees may be accommodated should the Harrow suite be closed.
- To attend and report to the Harrow 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 Harrow.
- 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 Harrow community
- To continue to encourage learning and professionalism through panel discussion and refresher training modules.
- To increase engagement with other panels, through cluster meetings, the London ICV Conference and shared training and resources if appropriate.
- Together with the MPA, to continue to promote and raise awareness of the work of Independent Custody Visitors.

