



METROPOLITAN POLICE AUTHORITY

Islington Independent Custody Visitors Panel

Annual Report 2009

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Introduction

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

The report covers a 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 Islington, 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. This year a standardised format has been introduced to facilitate a better understanding of the performance of the panels across London. This new reporting format brings Islington in line with other parts of the London ICV Scheme.

Aims and Objectives

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.

In the previous annual report the following specific aims and objectives were set out for 2009:

- **To make a total of not less than 52 visits to the custody suite in the borough, and visit overflow sites where necessary.**

The panel made 65 visits during the year. During 2009 Islington joined the self introduction pilot.

- **To continue to vary the day and time of visits in order to provide a better spread. Spread visits evenly over the days of the week and in particular to ensure that a minimum of 10% of visits are carried out between 20:00 and 04:00.**

The panel has been very successful in spreading visits evenly over the week. The only day under represented was Tuesday. With regard to times of day. There were no visits undertaken between 23:10 and 08:36 and a total of four visits between 20:00 and 04:00 (6%).

- **To continue to ensure that the rights and interests of detainees are upheld and to raise concerns promptly and effectively with local police or the MPA as appropriate.**

The panel acts in the interest of the detainee where possible at the time of detention. Six-weekly panel meetings are held to follow up concerns and discuss remedial action. Other matters are escalated to the Custody Directorate via the MPA.

- **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.**

A suite of refresher training modules have been created for panels which the Islington panel is working through at panel meetings when time allows.

- **Together with the MPA, to continue to promote and raise awareness of the work of Independent Custody Visitors.**

This is a work in progress.

- **To attempt, through the application of an equal opportunities recruitment policy, to ensure that the panel reflects the age, gender and ethnic diversity of the Borough of Islington.**

The panel has remained fairly constant but recruitment is ongoing and initiatives to reach diverse community groups is a priority.

Chairman's report

2009

This report reflects the contributions made by each member from our panel of volunteers who have given their time throughout the year to conduct visits to Islington's custody suites. It is a continuing testament to their commitment and their contributions. The highlighted concerns and issues have helped forge an ongoing dialogue with local representatives of the MPS; ensuring the welfare of detainees held in police custody remains a high priority within the borough.

For a second year this report highlights a number of ongoing procedural issues within the custody process with particular regard to the provision of detainee's rights and entitlements. It is hoped that recent procedural changes and the introduction of dedicated Custody Sergeants will help alleviate these concerns. Accordingly, the panel will continue to monitor this area; seeking immediate resolution where appropriate and highlighting and reporting any such concerns.

I would like to express my thanks to the panel for ensuring a consistent quality and level of visits and for continuing to foster a healthy dialogue throughout panel meetings. It is particularly heartening that the panel has exceeded its visit quota; conducting 65 visits throughout the year. Additionally the panel has managed to conduct a wide spread of visiting times whilst embracing the Self-Introduction scheme.

In addition I would also like to thank those panel members who have again offered their time and services to other boroughs; assisting with volunteer shortages and sharing their time and skills. Finally I would also like to acknowledge the assistance of panel co-ordinator Tony Hawker who has maintained a good relationship between our panel members, the MPS and MPA.

Spencer Pawson

Chair
Islington Panel

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 races, genders, sexualities, abilities and age on the panel.

The membership of the Islington panel remained fairly constant. The MPA had a drive to recruit across the Metropolitan Police area and some boroughs proved easier than others. Consequently, there was a constant stream of people in the borough wishing to become ICVs. Not all of these translated into new members of the panel but the panel remained at about 16 strong.

The panel has been broadly representative of the borough as a whole. The borough has a fairly low proportion of White British residents (57%, compared to the city-wide average of 60%), but a higher proportion of residents drawn from all the White groups (75% against 71%). The ethnicity of the borough is broken down as follows: White British and Irish - 75%; Black / Black British - 12%; Asian / Asian British - 6%; Mixed - 4%; Chinese and Other - 3% (categories and data from census 2001).

We do operate an equal opportunities policy as far as recruitment is concerned and welcome applications from all sections of the community. We have been successful in the past year in recruiting younger members to the panel. We would hope to be successful in the future in recruiting from hitherto unrepresented ethnic minorities as well as increasing the number of men.

The Panel members who made custody visits during 2008 were:

Eric Davis (Vice Chair)
Helen Schofield
Imelda Keaney
Jackie Hall
Jan Tucker
Lidia Erlichman (Vice Chair)
Maria Roche
Mary-Ann Craig

Nick Collier
Niroo Swaffer
Oliver Snodin
Rachel Standing
Ricardo Degli-Angeli
Sophie Moorcock
Spencer Pawson (Chair)
Tola Akinde-Hummel

Visits to police stations

During 2008 the numbers of detainees held in Islington police custody facilities were as follows:

- Islington (Tolpuddle St) 10,352
 - Holloway 331
- Total 10,683

Detainee concerns

There have been few major concerns voiced by detainees interviewed during 2009. Of all detainees who accepted a visit, 68% had no complaints about their treatment while detained. The issues most reported to ICVs by detainees were: issues concerning legal advice or rights not having been received – including telephone calls and relatives being informed – (8%); not receiving medical attention promptly from the FME service (8%); requests for washing facilities (2%); requests for or complaints about not being offered food and drink (2%); complaints about the temperature of the cells and/or lack of blankets when cold (2%). The majority of these and other concerns raised by detainees were resolved to the satisfaction of the ICVs at the time of the visit.

Matters requiring a Police response

The majority of matters requiring a police response to the panel at panel meetings (i.e. those listed on part 1 of the visit report form) concerned:

- the custody process – detainee rights seeming to have been delayed or withheld; reviews not having been conducted or recorded as conducted; delay in solicitors and Appropriate Adults being called;
- the FME service, the delay in examining detainees and the FME facilities;
- washing and personal hygiene concerns and detainee welfare/safety
- cleanliness and order of the custody suite generally.

Following the renovation work done in the latter part of 2008 at Islington Station there seemed to be less problems reported about failings with the built infrastructure than had been the case in the last two years.

Of the 65 visit report forms that the panel submitted following their visits, 22 had no matters requiring a police response indicated.

However at the panel meetings some issues were raised that touched on more generic aspects of custody. For example, the potential for vulnerable/unwell detainees not identified as such quickly because of long delays in booking in. The removal of immigration detainees from police cells at inappropriate times and the need for general matters of detainee welfare to be highlighted in the processes and procedures of custody. These and other concerns were escalated to the Custody Directorate at their regular meetings with the MPA and responses received via the ICV Scheme Manager.

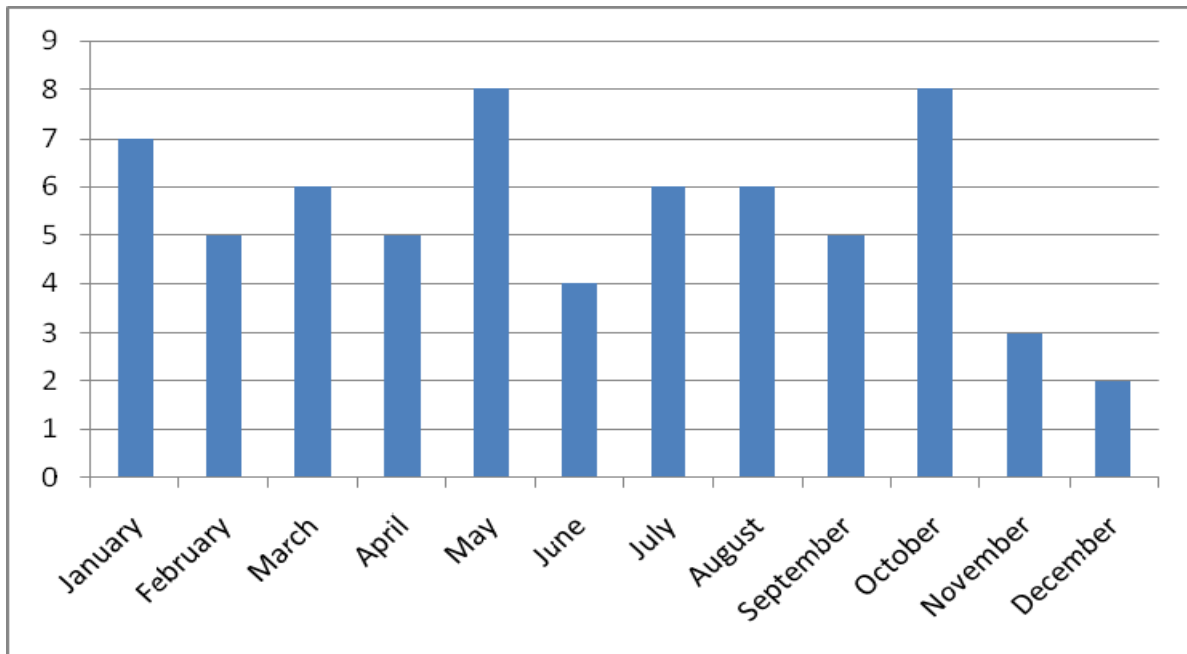
Data from panel visits

1. Number of Visits (All Stations):

Station

Station	Annual no. of visits	% of annual target
Islington (Tolpuddle St)	65	-
Holloway	0	
Total	65	125%

2. Breakdown by month of visits in London borough of Islington 2009:

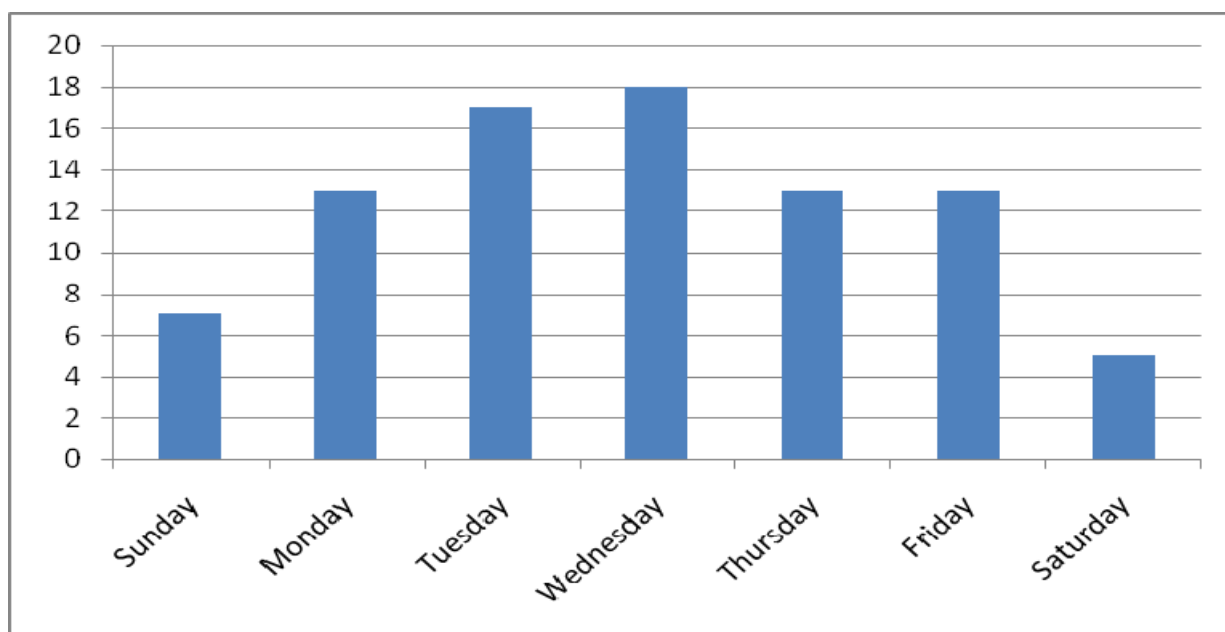


3. Time of Day of Visits

Time range	Number of visits	%
00:00 – 06:00 hrs	0	-
06:00 – 12:00	22	-
12:00 – 18:00	34	
18:00 – 00:00	9	
Total	65	-

4. Days of Visits (MPS only)

	Annual no.	% of all visits
Sunday	8	12%
Monday	11	17%
Tuesday	6	9%
Wednesday	10	15.3%
Thursday	10	15.3%
Friday	10	15.3%
Saturday	10	15.3%
Total	65	-



5. Details of Detainees at the times of Visits

	2009	% 2009	% 2008
Detainees held at time of visits	724	-	-
Detainees offered a visit	447	-	-
Detainees seen	346	77%	72%
Detainees who refused to be seen	101	22%	28%

6. Numbers of detainees by age:

	Male	Female
Adult	559	93
Juvenile	68	4

7. Numbers of detainees by type:

PACE	Immigration	Other
697	14	13

Plans for forthcoming year 2010

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

- To make a total of not less than 52 visits to the custody suite in the borough, and visit overflow sites where necessary.
- To continue to vary the day and time of visits in order to provide a better spread. Spread visits evenly over the days of the week and in particular to ensure that a minimum of 10% of visits are carried out between 20:00 and 04:00.
- To continue to ensure that the rights and interests of detainees are upheld and to raise concerns promptly and effectively with local police or the MPA as 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 age, gender and ethnic diversity of the Borough of Islington.