

# Kingston upon Thames Independent Custody Visitors Panel

## Annual Report 2009

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# Introduction

Welcome to the annual report of the Kingston upon Thames 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 Kingston upon Thames, 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. The Kingston Upon Thames Custody Visiting Panel forms part of the London ICV Scheme.

# 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.

Kingston upon Thames has only one station with a custody suite that operates 24 hours a day; this is situated in Kingston town centre. It is the practice of the panel to make weekly visits to the custody suite. The panel made 46 visits during 2009; this represents an achievement of 88% of the target; continuing the significant improvement begun in 2008. There is no doubt that, as last year, a stable membership throughout the year has been a contributory factor.

In the majority of cases, no significant issues have been raised by visit reports. There have been a few concerns that have been promptly resolved by the custody officer during the visit, or by the custody manager at panel meetings. Visits were again reasonably spread throughout the week with visits taking place on every day including weekends. Times of visits were reasonably distributed throughout the days, although more visits in the morning period are required.

With a full complement of trained and experienced visitors there has been no further recruitment in 2009.

The panel continued throughout the year to participate in a self-introduction pilot exercise.

# Chair's Report

Welcome to the 2009 Annual Report for Kingston upon Thames Independent Custody Visiting panel. I am proud to be able to introduce my fourth report as Chair following another year of significant achievement.

It is important to recognise that custody visitors are volunteers who do a significant and often difficult job and therefore their support is vital in improving and developing the scheme in the future. I would therefore like to begin by offering my sincere thanks and appreciation to all the dedicated and committed custody visitors on my panel. My thanks also go to the Borough Commander Chief Superintendent Martin Greenslade, the Custody Inspectors, the Custody Sergeants and the Police staff at Kingston Police Station who have all been very appreciative of the service we provide.

As in the previous years it is pleasing to report that most of our aims have been met including achieving our goal to spread the visits at different times of the day/night, days of the week, at staff changeover times and following Friday & Saturday night events at the local nightclubs. The self introduction that was piloted in Kingston has been very successful and we will continue to use it as the number of visits accepted has increased.

The panel is delighted to state that the visiting process continues to indicate that here in Kingston the treatment of detained persons within custody is fair and in accordance with the rules and regulations as outlined in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (referred to as PACE), and the associated Codes of Practice relating to detained persons. The custody suite has continued to be a well run facility and there have been no major concerns in 2009.

The successful working relationship that custody visitors have with the custody staff continues and this has enabled us to have a shared agenda, meet targets and achieve positive outcomes for the welfare of the detainees. We continue to be their critical friends whilst maintaining our Independence. It was not surprising therefore to be asked to convey praises from detainees to the custody staff for the high level of care they've received whilst being detained at Kingston Police Station.

I was interviewed by Inspectors from HMIC & HMIP who needed verification and evaluation of the competence and appropriateness of the service provided at the custody suite. I look forward to receiving a copy of their report which will no doubt re-iterate the positive comments I've made about how efficiently the custody suite is managed at Kingston Police Station.

I plan to step down as Chair but will still be a panel member to keep the consistency of a steady panel that we've had for the past two years. I am certain that KICV panel will be well managed by my successor and in 2010 we hope to be able to continue our work in ensuring that the rights and entitlements of detainees are met.

Kind Regards

Prabha Shetty  
Chair, KICV 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 panel continues to be healthily diverse in terms of age, gender and ethnicity. A diversity monitoring exercise was conducted across the London ICV scheme during 2008 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 that the MPA was fulfilling its statutory responsibility in ensuring that no specific communities were denied access to membership of the scheme. Last year, as this, the available data compared to population projection data\* indicates that the panel continues to reasonably reflect the community from which it is drawn.

During 2009 no member left or joined the panel. This stability contributed to the strength of the panel's performance throughout the year.

The MPA requires visitors to make at least 12 visits a year and it would not be possible to achieve this target and maintain a much larger panel. It is therefore intended to maintain a pipeline of potential candidates, but to hold the panel membership at roughly the current level. An equal opportunities policy is operated as far as recruitment is concerned and applications from all sections of the community are welcomed. It is intended that any future recruitment will try to match the diversity of the local community.

\*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 is only one custody suite in the borough, in Kingston town centre, that operates full time; the panel makes weekly, unannounced visits there.

The majority of the reports have not raised any significant issues that had to be brought to the attention of the MPA or which required a response from the local police. However, there have been some issues and queries all of which have been resolved:

- Questions about cleaning within custody and supplies ie blankets and mattresses
- Queries about observation times, reviews and access to custody records
- Minor problems with gaining access to the custody suite and ensuring all new officers and staff are aware of the ICV's role.
- Occasional concerns regarding the control of temperature and air conditioning within custody

# **Panel Membership 2009**

**Prabha Shetty: Chair**

**Angela Filkin: Vice Chair**

**Jodie Alliston**

**Miriam Jivram**

**Rashid Laher**

**David Plews**

**Anthony Skehan**

**Alice Thurling**

**Yvonne Dawes**

**Peter Sewell**



# 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.*

## 1. Number of Visits

Station	2009	2008
<b>Kingston</b>	<b>46</b>	47
Total 52	<b>(88%)</b>	(90%)

## 2. Visit times

Time slots	2009	2008
0000 – 0600 hrs	<b>1</b>	0
0600 – 1200 hrs	<b>14</b>	15
1200 – 1800 hrs	<b>11</b>	22
1800 – 0000 hrs	<b>20</b>	10
Total	<b>46</b>	47

## 3. Visits Days

Days	2009	2008
Monday	<b>8</b>	9
Tuesday	<b>8</b>	7
Wednesday	<b>7</b>	5
Thursday	<b>10</b>	10
Friday	<b>7</b>	9
Saturday	<b>4</b>	4
Sunday	<b>2</b>	3
Total	<b>46</b>	47

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

Total number of detainees at visits inc .those out of cell or in interview etc	<b>106</b>
Nos . seen	<b>43</b>
Nos. Refused	<b>6</b>
PACE detainees	<b>56</b>
Immigration detainees	<b>3</b>
Other	
Home Office	
Male	<b>51</b>
Female	<b>8</b>
Adult	<b>51</b>
Juvenile	<b>8</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

1. Aim to reach /maintain a target of 52 visits per year. Number and days/times of visits to be discussed at Panel meetings so that additional visits can be added when visits have been missed.
2. Continue to ensure that the time of visits provide a good spread with days and times of visits being monitored at Panel meetings.
3. Ensure Panel members keep training up to date attending refresher training sessions, by regular discussion of training needs at Panel meetings, and by conducting refresher training modules as appropriate.
4. 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.
5. Chair and Vice Chair will attend MPA meetings as appropriate and to feed back issues at Panel meetings.
6. Make sure that a Panel representative attends Kingston Community and Police Partnership meetings, represents the work of the panel to the Partnership, and reports back at Panel meetings.
7. Together with the MPA, continue to promote the London ICV scheme and raise awareness of the work of Independent Custody Visitors.
8. Continue to participate in the self-introduction pilot scheme pending a final decision based upon detailed analysis of the accumulated data.