



METROPOLITAN POLICE AUTHORITY

Waltham Forest Independent Custody Visitors Panel

ANNUAL REPORT 2009

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the annual report of the Waltham Forest Independent Custody Visitors (ICV) Panel.

This report covers the period from 01/01/09 to 31/12/09.

The purpose of this report is to give a general overview of the work of the Waltham Forest ICV Panel and:

- Evaluate the panel's performance for 2009
- Provide the local community and the Metropolitan Police Authority (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 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 Waltham Forest, 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.

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.

ACHIEVEMENTS

The Waltham Forest panel currently schedules one visit per week to Chingford Police Station. This is the minimum requirement that the MPA sets panels as a target. This year the panel managed a visiting level of 73% overall (38 of 52 visits carried out over the year), which is a slight increase on last year.

The Waltham Forest Panel met every eight weeks throughout 2009, at Waltham Forest Town Hall, and this venue continues to be most satisfactory for the panel. From 2010 the panel will meet quarterly in line with London wide scheme changes.

The panel's police liaison changed in the early part of 2009 when Inspector Janne Bennewith became Custody Inspector, however in late summer Inspector Bennewith left custody to take up another role and ICV liaison responsibility was handed to Inspector Lisa Butterfield.

Visit reports continue to emphasise the good work and attitude of the custody staff at Chingford towards the ICVs during their visits.

Membership now stands at eight, and the MPA has deemed that panels with just one 24/7 police station require a membership of nine ICVs. A membership level of nine allows ICVs to maintain a visiting level of one visit each per month, as laid out in the scheme handbook and memorandum of understanding. Therefore there is a need to recruit one or two new panel members in 2010.

In regards to the diversity of the Waltham Forest panel, it is not fully reflective of the local area; where over half the population in the Borough is white. As well as this just over half the borough's population are women, which again the panel does not reflect as less than half the panel are female. 2010 will see a focus on recruiting younger people and women to the panel in order to better reflect the diversity of Waltham Forest.

CHAIR'S REPORT

I would firstly like to thank all panel members who have contributed to the level of visiting in Waltham Forest over the last year; this has been very much appreciated by the MPA. 2009 saw a stabilisation of the panel so there was no recruitment, however, with the loss of some members we look forward in 2010 to recruiting some new volunteers.

Thanks also go to the police custody staff in Waltham Forest, whose cooperation often in difficult circumstances, has been of great value to the panel. Special thanks to Inspector Janne Bennewith and Inspector Lisa Butterfield for their help and assistance with panel meetings and in dealing with issues raised by the panel.

Finally we would like to thank the MPA for overseeing the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme and for providing the funds and training, so that we can perform our community role.

Gurparshad Bance
Waltham Forest ICVP Chair
2009

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.

At the end of 2009 the Waltham Forest panel had eight accredited members.

Name	Appointed
Gurparshad Bance	2000
Mohammed A Butt	2007
Jennifer Paul-Christian	2007
Baffour Owusu-Abeyie	2008
Christine Williams	2008
Elisabeth Davies	2008
Franklin Danso	2008
Shaukat Ali	2008

The following members resigned/de-accredited during 2009

Syed Iqbal	1998
Khaliq Mian	2000
Barry Brown	2004
Francis Coleman (transferred to Newham)	2008

The panel comprises of five men and three women with varying diversity in age and ethnicity.

Recruitment

No recruitment took place in 2009 as the panel stabilised itself, however with some departures it is hoped that one or two more members will be recruited in early 2010.

VISITS TO POLICE STATIONS

The panel made no visits to Walthamstow station in 2009 (alternative and overflow facility), as the need for its use was reduced.

Good standards of care have been noted at Chingford over the course of the year, with very few issues of note. The relationship with custody staff has continued to be very positive; during 2009 Waltham Forest borough recruited a significant number of Designated Detention Officers (DDOs) in line with the Metropolitan Police Service's (MPS) Operation Herald. This Met wide project aims to reduce the need for police officers to work in custody, by employing civilian jailers, thus releasing officers for other duties. This has certainly had a positive effect in the case of Chingford, as dedicated custody staff have a greater knowledge and understanding of the workings in custody and the ICV role.

ICVs have been happy with the way in which jailers have explained their role to detainees, and answered their queries during visits.

Delays in entering the custody suite are rare, even though visits often take place at busy times. It is a source of satisfaction to the panel that there have been few complaints, if any, from detainees on how they are treated at Chingford.

DATA FROM PANEL VISITS

Please see attached charts for performance data on visits carried out by the panel during 2009.

1. Number of visits

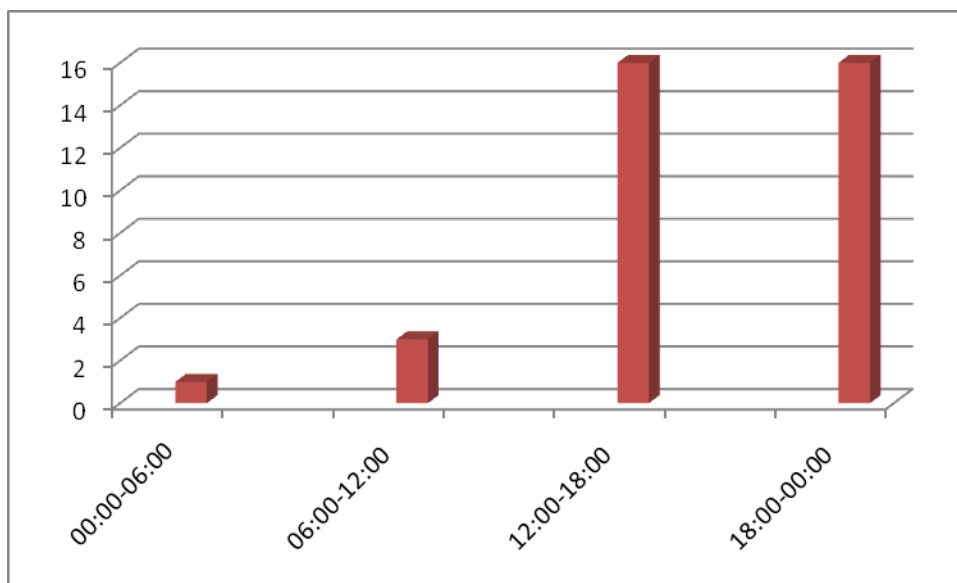
Station	Annual no. of visits	% of Annual Target*
Chingford	38	73%
Walthamstow	0	0
Total	38	73%

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

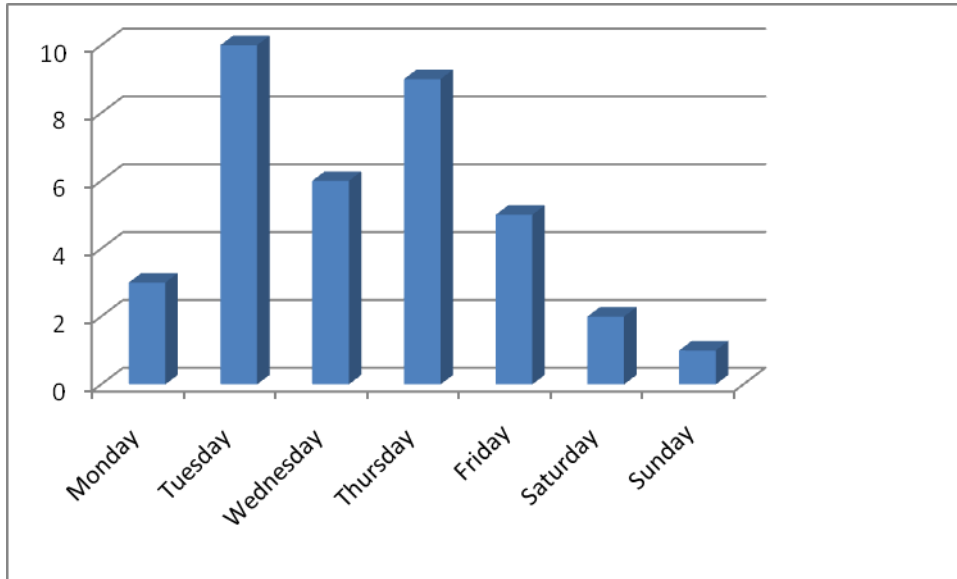
As can be seen from the above table, there were a total of 38 visits made throughout the year to Chingford Police Station, none were made to Walthamstow but this station is only visited if it is open and ICVs have been notified.

2. Time and day of visits

Time period in which visits took place

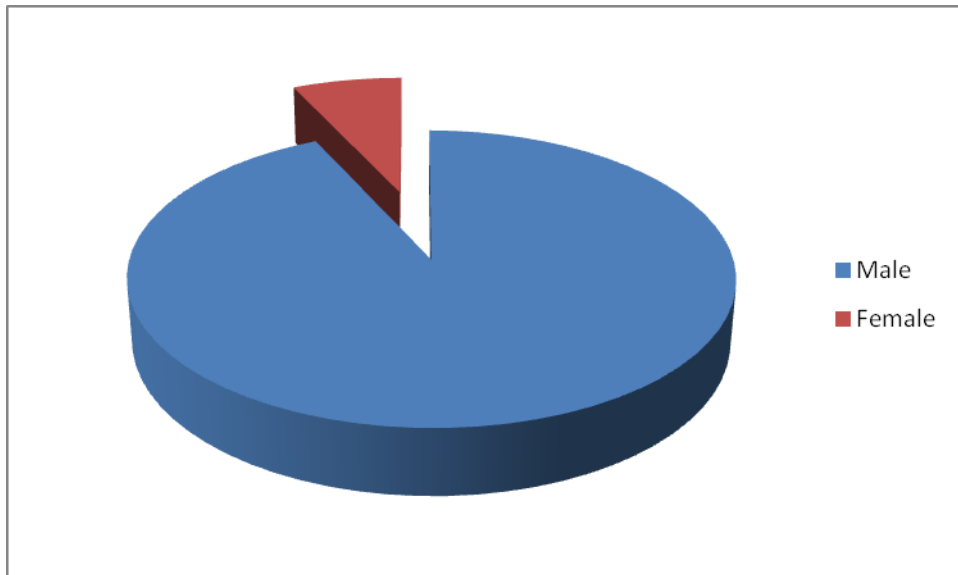


Days that visits took place

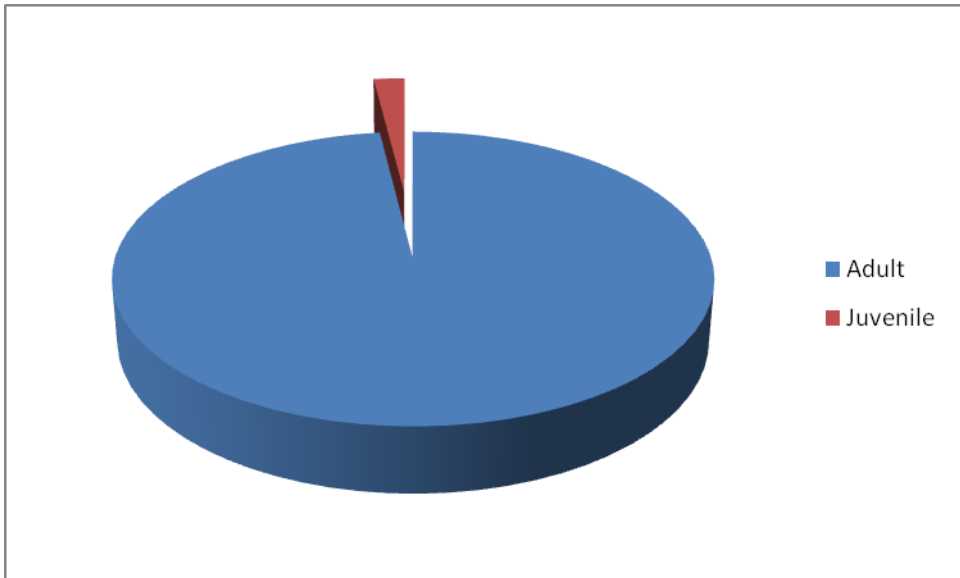


The graphs above and on the previous page show that visits were spread throughout the week, however, the majority were on Tuesdays and Thursdays and were mainly undertaken between midday and midnight.

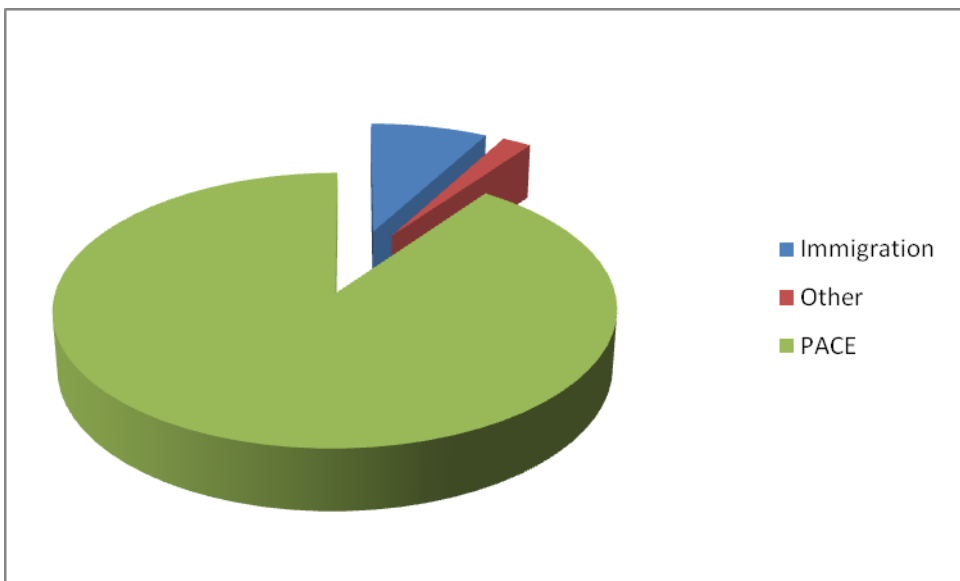
3. Detainee demographics



As can be seen from the pie charts above and below the vast majority of detainees were male and combined with the chart below most were adults.



From the chart below it can be seen that the vast majority of those held in custody were held under PACE. Much smaller numbers were held under immigration, “other” which includes those who were bailed to return (BTR) and those wanted on a warrant (WOW).



4. Concerns

When visitors speak to detainees they record any concerns that detainees raise with them.

Visitors do not wake detainees if they are asleep, however they will usually check through the wicket in the door to check that all looks well in the cell. Visitors check concerns raised by detainees against their custody record (where permission has been gained from the detainee to do so), and will bring matters to the attention of the police if they remain concerned about any aspect of the detainee’s treatment or welfare. Most minor concerns can be resolved during the visit and only more major or more complicated concerns are discussed at a meeting of the whole panel.

Over the course of the year there have been very few concerns raised by detainees being held in stations in Waltham Forest, those that have been raised over the year include requests for food, drink, blankets and telephone calls. These are often brought to the attention of staff by ICVs and dealt with whilst the visitors are still present at the station. The issue of blankets is one that is raised across all the boroughs.

PLANS FOR 2010

Targets:

- To build on last year's visiting level and aim to carry out visits once a week to Waltham Forest's main custody facility.
- A weekly visit to Walthamstow station if and when it is in use.
- To increase and maintain panel membership to a minimum of nine (as stipulated by the MPA).
- To carry out regular (at least twice per year) refresher training during panel meetings.
- To build and maintain links between the panel and the local Community Engagement Group.
- To raise the profile of the panel and scheme across the borough through wider circulation of the annual report and publicity materials.