

Hackney Independent Custody Visitors Panel

Annual Report 2010

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Introduction

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

The report covers the period from January 2010 to December 2010

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 2011.

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.

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 Hackney panel are required to make weekly unannounced visits to Stoke Newington and Shoreditch. In addition visits may be made to Hackney Police Station when it is used in special operations.

- To make a total of 52 visits over the year at a rate of 1 visit per week to both Stoke Newington and Shoreditch Police Stations.
- To maintain the even distribution of visits across the week.
- To achieve a more even distribution of the times of visits across the 24 hour period, to include occasional visits between 21:00 & 24:00 and between 06:00 & 09:00.
- To build and maintain panel membership at a minimum of 17 volunteers.
- To maintain and improve upon the level of communication with Hackney police, the custody manager during panel meetings, custody staff during visits, other Hackney custody users and other ICV panels.
- 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.
- To run a brief series of short (1-2 hour) refresher training courses for the Hackney Panel.
- 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 Hackney across all strands.
- To investigate new initiatives designed to target different types of people and increase the take up of the ICV role.

The panel made a total of 83 visits throughout 2010 to Hackney police stations. Against a target of 104 visits to be carried out during the year at a rate of one visit per week to each station, this represents an achievement of 80% of the annual target. Most of the visits that were missed were in the first quarter of the year and the panels record for the remainder was extremely good. The earliest visit was undertaken at 07:32 and there were five visits after 20:00, the latest at 21:28. 30 visits were made between 12:00 and 18:00 which was the period of the highest density of visits.

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.

Recent diversity monitoring has been undertaken giving the opportunity of comparing each of the London panels against the diversity of their boroughs. However, because incomplete diversity monitoring and the significant changes in personnel during 2010 it is not possible to give an accurate statistical picture on ethnicity, age and gender for the year and how this compares with the borough profile. The panel endeavours to be broadly representative of Hackney and has the appearance of matching the borough profile to some degree.

During 2010 there were eight resignations including one member who was unable to return at the end of a year's sabbatical and another who transferred briefly to another panel before resigning. The MPA recruited four new members to the panel and there were two ICVs who transferred to the panel from other panels. At the end of 2010 the panel had 14 members, six male and eight female which roughly matches the borough as a whole where the ratio is 49% male, 51% female.

The following ICVs were members of the Hackney ICV panel during 2010.

Mary Pimm, Co-Chair

Steven Oram

Niahra Allen

Melanie Norton

Alison Murdoch, Co-Vice Chair

Cleo Palmer, Co-Vice Chair

Prince Balwah

Osaro Aiyeola

Olakunle Omowumi

Beverley Hinds

Holly Dabbs

Samuel Bedford

Bartholomew Nkwocha

Jean-Michel Garcia-Alvarez

Resigned during 2010

Christina Jordean, Co-Chair

Carolyn Hillery

Shabnum Hassan,

John Dixon (sabbatical)

Mohammed Hafesji

Samantha Bryant

Bethan Taylor (transferred to Camden)

Catriona Maclay

Tower Hamlets members who visited with the Hackney Panel during 2010:

Madeleine Craggs

Peter Tihanyi

Suzette Barry

Visits to Police Stations

There are two 24/7 custody suites in the borough of Hackney; the panel makes weekly, unannounced visits to Stoke Newington and Shoreditch stations. Hackney Station is also used on occasions and the ICV panel made four visits during the year.

Detainee Concerns

During 2010 a total of 10,091 detainees were held in the Hackney custody suits of which 471 were in custody when Hackney ICV panel members visited. Of these 422 were asked if they wished to speak to Hackney ICVs, 143 refused the visit. Of those who accepted (279), 192 had no complaints and made no requests to the ICVs.

There were just over a hundred individual complaints or requests made to ICVs during the year and some detainees made more than one. Of those who did indicate that they were experiencing difficulties or make requests, the majority concerned health issues such as the need to see a doctor or receive medication (19), waiting for legal representation and support or receiving notice of their rights (a combined total of 26) and 17 concerned requests that relatives be informed or for the use of a telephone. There 10 were complaints voiced (but not necessarily lodged) by detainees at their treatment during the arrest process or in detention. Of the remainder, 19 were requests for food, drink, washing opportunities, reading matter or concerned the condition of their cell or other general infrastructure problems. Most detainee concerns were resolved by the visiting ICVs at the time of the visit but some were escalated to the MPA as matters requiring a response from the police.

Matters requiring a police response

The majority of the visit report forms (48) did not have any matters requiring a police response. Those that did fell into the following categories:

- Legal: detainees claiming to not have received their rights; delay in access to a solicitor or an appropriate adult (7) and delay in having relatives informed of their detention (3)
- Problems with the FME service, delay in FMEs attending and the FME room not being locked when not in use (9).
- Other health concerns such as detainees requiring access to already prescribed medication (5).
- Problems with custody officers including behaviour (1); officers not understanding the role of ICVs (5) and ICVs kept waiting for entry to the custody suite (1).
- General welfare of detainees such as the provision of food and drink; access to showers and washing facilities and the provision of blankets (4).
- Safety, hygiene and problems with the infrastructure (buzzers not working etc) (7).
- General inquiries on police policy and other issues (6).

There is a good relationship between the custody staff and the panel. The police are represented at all panel meetings by the incumbent Custody Manager.

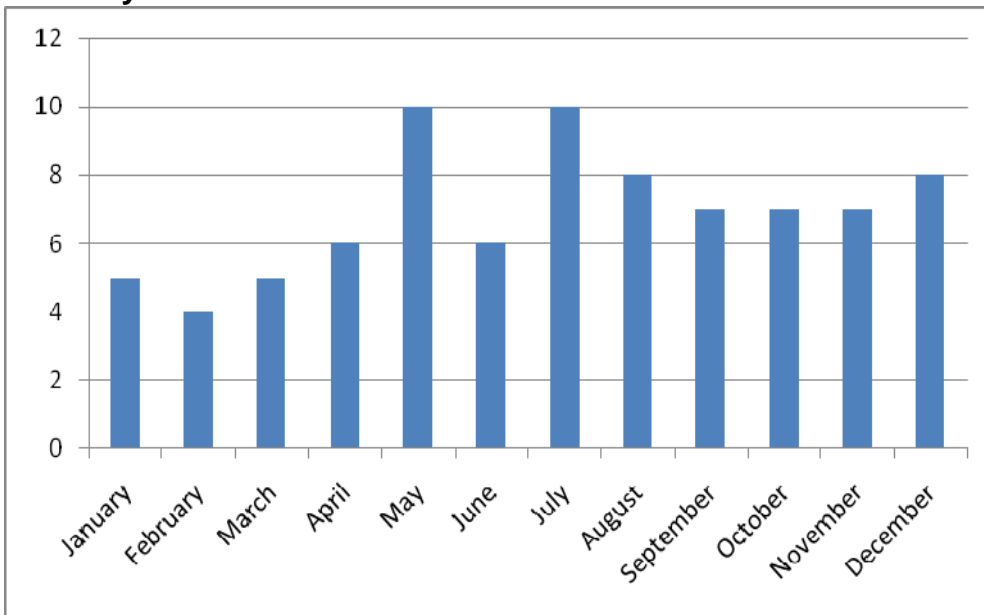
Data from Panel Visits

1. Number of Visits

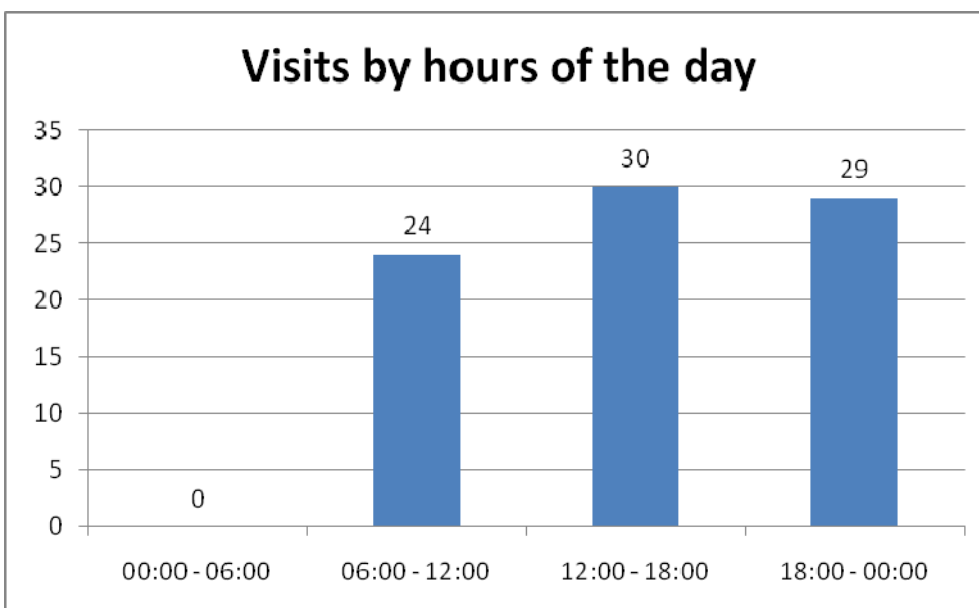
Station	Annual no. of visits	% of Annual Target*
Stoke Newington	42	-
Shoreditch	37	-
Hackney	4	-
Total	83	80%

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

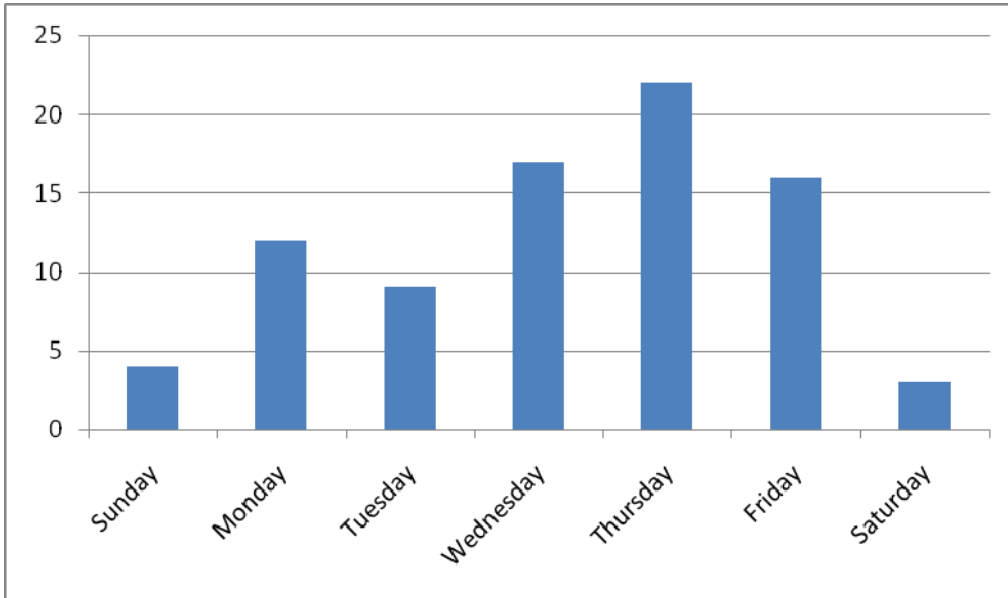
2. By month



3. By hours of the day



By days of the week



Breakdown of detainees at the time of the visits

Total in custody	Offered a visit	Accepted a visit	Refused a visit
471	422	279	143

	Adult	Juvenile	Total
Male	361	27	388
Female	78	5	83
Total	439	32	471

Detainee by type

PACE	Immigration	Other	Total
448	17	6	471

Detainee Concerns (mostly resolved by the ICVs at the time of the visit)

Health & awaiting doctors	19	Inform relative /telephone use	17
Matter concerning solicitors	13	Notice of rights & entitlements	12
Complaint at treatment	10	Requests for food and drink	10
Interpreter	9	Request for a blanket	7
General infrastructure	4	Washing	3
Reading matter	2	Appropriate adult	1

Plans for Forthcoming Year 2011

Aims & Objectives

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