

Islington Independent Custody Visitors Panel

Annual Report 2010

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Introduction

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

The report covers a period from January 2010 to December 2010

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 2010:

- **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 61 visits during the year. During 2010 Islington continued to follow the self introduction model and agreed at the end of the year to continue with it indefinitely.
- **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. There were slightly less visits undertaken on the weekend. Of weekdays, Thursday was an anomaly with almost twice as many visits done than any other day. With regard to times of day. The latest visit was commenced at 22:03 and the earliest 08:25 with nothing in between.
- **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. Quarterly panel meetings are held to follow up concerns and discuss remedial action. Other matters are escalated directly with the custody manager or 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 2010

This report details the commendable contributions made by the volunteers from Islington panel throughout 2010. I am particularly proud that, for a second year running, the panel surpassed its number of required visits. It is a testament to the dedication of the panel. This ongoing commitment continues to ensure that detainees' rights and entitlements are maintained within a safe and transparent custody process in Islington.

For a third consecutive year procedural issues within the custody process; those pertaining to the provision of detainees' rights and entitlements, are the most commonly reported. Whilst this reflects the panel's due diligence of core ICV values it also highlights the continued importance of the panel's work in ensuring that these rights and entitlements are upheld. In addition the reporting of broader, holistic, concerns detailing detainees' welfare has helped maintain, and hopefully increase, awareness of these personal needs with custody staff.

The general health and mental wellbeing of detainees has continued to be a focus of ICV attention throughout the year. As a panel we have welcomed the introduction of dedicated on-site nursing staff into the custody suite and appreciate the subsequent reduction in medical waiting times. Furthermore ICV-led proactive initiatives such as identifying and explaining behind-the-scenes procedures; such as pending appropriate adults or solicitors, has delivered simple solutions to detainees' concerns. I very much welcome this move away from a check-list driven approach. Over the coming year I would like to see the panel continue this approach; prioritising and promoting the welfare of detainee's, in addition to upholding their rights and entitlements.

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 16 strong with one new member recruited during the year.

The panel is healthily diverse in its make-up and although this diversity doesn't form an exact match to the demographic breakdown of the borough as identified by census figures and projections, we can confidently state that no applicants are denied membership of the Islington panel on the basis of any information provided in the diversity monitoring completed on application

We do operate an equal opportunities policy as far as recruitment is concerned and welcome applications from all sections of the community. 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 2010 were:

David Mery	Mary-Ann Craig (Vice Chair)
Eric Davis	Nick Collier
Helen Schofield	Niroo Swaffer
Imelda Keaney	Rachel Standing
Jackie Hall	Ricardo Degli-Angeli
Jan Tucker	Sophie Moorcock
Lidia Erlichman (Vice Chair)	Spencer Pawson (Chair)
Maria Roche	Tola Akinde-Hummel

At the AGM held in March 2010, Eric Davis stood down as Vice Chair and Mary-Ann Craig was elected to the post. Spencer Pawson was elected as Chair.

Visits to police stations

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

• Islington (Tolpuddle St)	9,933
• Holloway	306
Total	10,239

Detainee concerns

There have been few major concerns voiced by detainees interviewed during 2010. Of all detainees who accepted a visit, 267 had no complaints about their treatment while detained.

The issues most reported to ICVs by detainees were: issues concerning legal advice, rights, concerns about relatives being informed and/or telephone calls and information about the progress of the case (39 instances in total). Health concerns and requests for prescribed medication (10). Other concerns were requests for food and drink (3), blankets (3), washing opportunities (2) and sundry other requests (7). The majority of these and other concerns raised by detainees were resolved to the satisfaction of the ICVs at the time of the visit. However some were among the matters escalated to the MPA and appeared as matters requiring a police response.

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 – rights being given, solicitors not being called or not responding in a timely fashion, delays in relatives being informed. There were instances where the NSPIS record of these matters was queried.
- the FME service and general health issues concerning individual detainees such as the supply of prescribed medication for pre-existing health conditions.
- washing and personal hygiene concerns and detainee welfare/safety
- reports on the supply of blankets and ambient meals.

Of the 61 visit report forms that the panel submitted following their visits, 32 had no matters requiring a police response.

However at the panel meetings some issues were raised that touched on more generic aspects of custody. For example, the panel was concerned that detainees were kept informed on the progress of their case and that they were informed if reviews were done while they were asleep or otherwise incapacitated. The panel decided that they would highlight particular issues and focus on them for a specified period. Solicitor call/response time was one such initiative. 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.

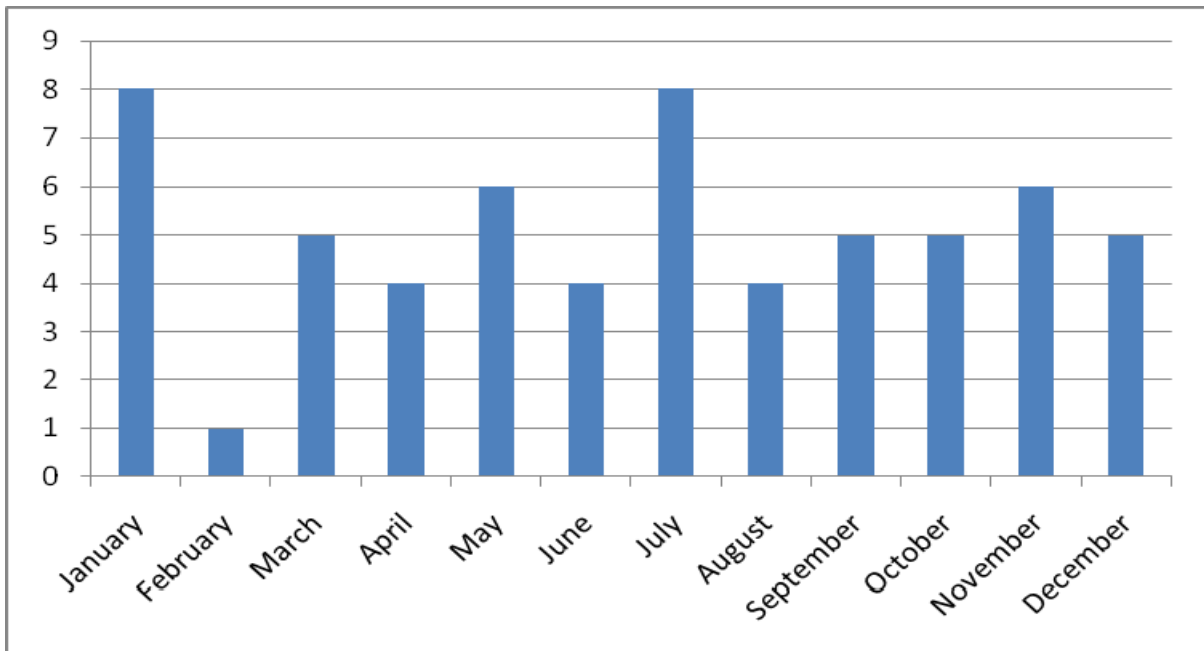
Data from panel visits

1. Number of Visits (All Stations):

Station

Station	Annual no. of visits	% of annual target
Islington (Tolpuddle St)	60	-
Holloway	1	
Total	61	100%+

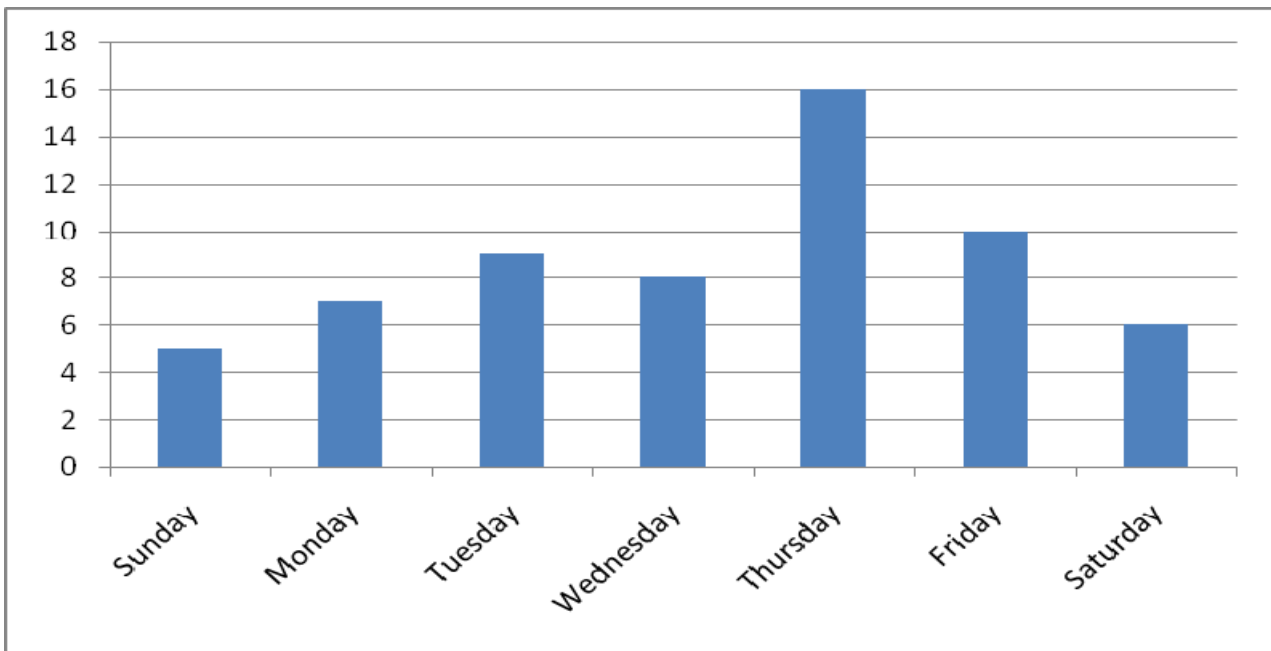
2. Breakdown by month of visits in London borough of Islington 2010:



3. Time of Day of Visits

Time range	Number of visits
00:00 – 06:00 hrs	0
06:00 – 12:00	14
12:00 – 18:00	30
18:00 – 00:00	17
Total	61

4. Days of Visits



5. Details of Detainees at the times of Visits

	2010
Detainees held at time of visits	591
Detainees offered a visit	371
Detainees seen	326
Detainees who refused to be seen	45

6. Numbers of detainees by age:

	Male	Female	Total
Adult	470	64	534
Juvenile	55	2	57
Total	525	66	

7. Numbers of detainees by type:

PACE	Immigration	Other
542	16	19

Plans for forthcoming year 2011

The Panel's aims and objectives for 2011 are as follows:

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