

# Richmond upon Thames Independent Custody Visitors Panel

## Annual Report 2010

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# Introduction

Welcome to the annual report of the Richmond upon Thames 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 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. Since April 2007 the MPA has overseen custody visiting arrangements in Richmond as part of the London ICV scheme. The scheme has the full support and cooperation of the Commissioner and the Borough Commander for Richmond upon Thames, but is independent of the police. The MPA holds overall responsibility for the scheme's management and administration and 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 that the panel is as diverse as the community it represents. 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. These are supplemented by the panel's constitution.

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 64 visits to the two custody suites in the borough, of which 52 to Richmond, with additional monthly visits to Teddington.*
- *To vary the time of visits in order to provide a good spread and in particular to try to increase the proportion of visits that are carried out between 8 pm and 8 am and reduce the number that are carried out early evening.*
- *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 Richmond.*

The panel completed 47 visits to Richmond and 3 visits to Twickenham while the Richmond custody suite was closed for refurbishment, plus 12 to Teddington, achieving 97% of our planned visits to the two main custody suites. This is a 6% increase in the number of visits carried out in 2009, which stood at 58 visits (91%).

Visits were reasonably well spread throughout the week but not so varied in terms of the times of visits.

In the majority of cases, detainees expressed no concerns about their treatment. A small number of recurring items were raised including requests for telephone calls and delays in the arrival of FME's.

The MPA provided diversity training in March which was attended by a member of the panel. We have also run a short training module within our panel meetings.

## Chairperson's report

2010 was a relatively uneventful year for the Richmond upon Thames custody panel. We started the year with eleven custody visitors and ended with nine. The drop in numbers has not impacted on our ability to carry out our scheduled visits, and we were also able to provide help with visits to the British Transport Police custody facility that was temporarily relocated to Hammersmith. We do however plan to recruit one additional visitor early in 2011.

Last year I reported that Richmond, along with other selected boroughs in London, participated in a self-introduction pilot. Self-introduction involves visitors introducing themselves directly to detainees and asking whether they wish to be interviewed. The results for the London wide trial have been collated by the MPA and it has been concluded that, as in an earlier trial in Hampshire, detainees are more likely to accept a visit when independent custody visitors are visible and introduce themselves. The MPA has directed that individual boroughs should make their own decision about whether to continue with self-introduction, and the Richmond panel has decided to do so.

During the year we carried out most of our scheduled visits and achieved 97% of our target compared to 91% in 2009 and 98% in 2008. The spread of visits through the week was reasonably even but there is a continuing problem with the timing of visits, with approximately two thirds taking place in the late afternoon and early evening.

In terms of outcome, we spoke to 101 of the 169 people who were in custody at the time of our visits (compared with 87 out of 137 in 2009). The majority of the detainees who agreed to be interviewed expressed no concerns at all about their treatment while in custody. For the most part, complaints were minor and could be dealt with on the spot. There were a couple of recurring issues: one requests for doctors, and the other requests for telephone calls. On no occasion were issues raised that were in breach of the PACE codes outlining the rights of people held in detention.

The changes to the MPA administration of the independent custody visiting scheme, mentioned in last year's report, were implemented as planned in January 2010. The principal impact for Richmond was a reduction in the number of panel meetings from six a year to four. Panel meetings give custody visitors an opportunity to share information about issues raised and to discuss any unresolved issues with the police. For the past few years, the Custody Inspector for Richmond has replied to issues requiring a police response as soon as they are raised on visit reports. Starting in 2010, interim reports between panel meetings have been a new and effective way to provide panel members with information on both issues raised and responses received.

# 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.

As we reported last year, it remains the case that the majority of our panel membership is female, compared with the population of the borough as a whole, which is 49% male. We do operate an equal opportunities policy as far as recruitment is concerned and will continue to welcome applications from all sections of the community as and when vacancies arise.

The panel membership at the beginning of the year was 11, but unfortunately two members resigned during the year.

In the past the number of visitors has been slightly more than is required to cover our commitment to weekly visits to Richmond and monthly visits to Teddington. This stability has been very welcome in terms of the experience of panel members and their ability to conduct effective visits. It has also enabled us to provide assistance to the Hammersmith and Fulham panel in the past, and more recently, two of our panel volunteered to help with visits to the British Transport Police custody facility that had been relocated to Hammersmith until November 2010.

New recruits attend MPA training and in addition we have delivered refresher training to panel members through short modules held at the end of panel meetings.

There have been occasions in the year to increase engagement with other panels- there have been London wide meetings directed specifically at panel Chairs, which the Chairperson and Vice Chair attended.

The Chair also attends the CPP (Community Police Partnership) meetings and presents the panel's annual report.

## Visits to police stations

There are two custody suites in the borough, but only Richmond Police Station operates full time. Teddington is used primarily for bail to return and for occasional overflow. Twickenham had been decommissioned as a custody suite but was used in on occasion during of the year, when Richmond custody closed for refurbishment

As well as weekly unannounced visits to Richmond, we schedule monthly visits to Teddington. Because Teddington is used on only an occasional basis, it is often the case that there are no detainees there when we visit. Nevertheless we consider it important that we continue to schedule regular visits.

This year we completed 47 visits to Richmond and 3 to Twickenham while Richmond was closed for refurbishment. We also made 12 visits to Teddington, against targets of 52 and 12 respectively. This represents an achievement of 97%, up on the previous year.

Visits are made in pairs and the visitors decide on times that are suitable to them. The graphs on the following pages show that the spread of visits was uneven, with approximately half being made in the early evening and another quarter in the morning. Unfortunately, we did not achieve our target of increasing the proportion of visits between 20:00 and 04:00. Visits have been fairly well spread out through the week, though more visits could take place on Mondays and Fridays. We will continue to monitor the timing and days of visits throughout the year and try to ensure that we are achieving a reasonable spread.

None of our reports raised any significant issues that had to be brought to the attention of the MPA, and only a few raised issues that required a response from the local police.

Throughout the year we commented on several occasions that the temperature control in Richmond custody was very poor with the cells often unacceptably warm or too cold. We hope this problem will be resolved in the new year.

As far as the detainees themselves are concerned, the majority of those who agreed to be interviewed expressed no concerns at all about their treatment while in custody. Most complaints were minor and could be dealt with on the spot. There were a couple of recurring issues: one requests for doctors, and the other requests for telephone calls.

We are pleased to report that requests for showers for detainees who are in custody for long periods and the need for interpreters were raised less often this year compared to previous years.

# Data from panel visits

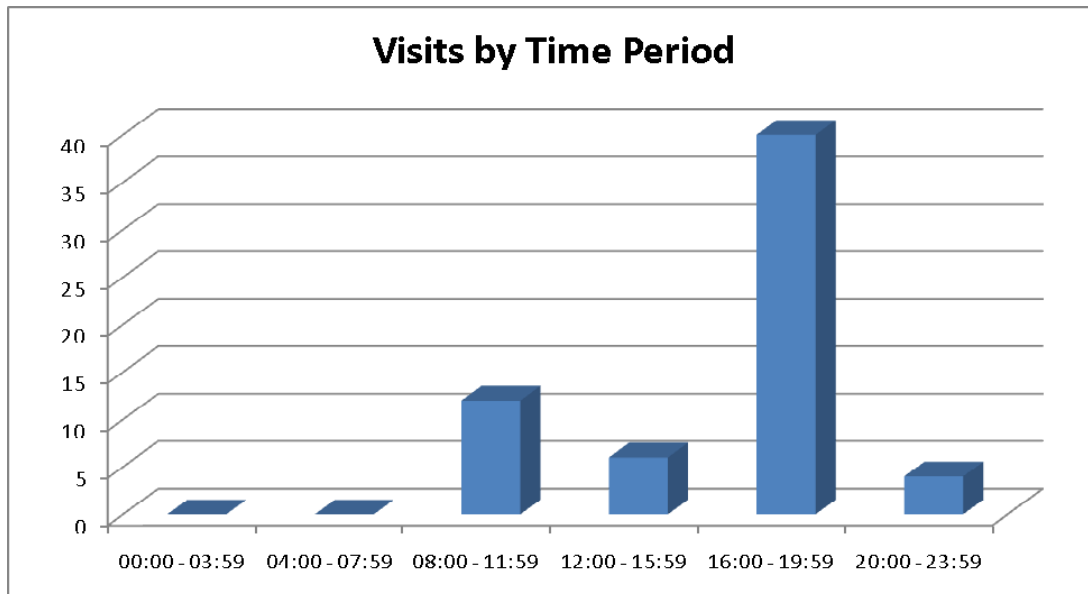
Visits undertaken in London borough of Richmond upon Thames during 2010:

## 1. Number of Visits:

Station	Annual no. of visits	% of annual target
Richmond (incl. 3 visits to Twickenham while Richmond closed)	50	96%
Teddington (overflow)	12	100%
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>97%</b>

## 2. Time of Visits

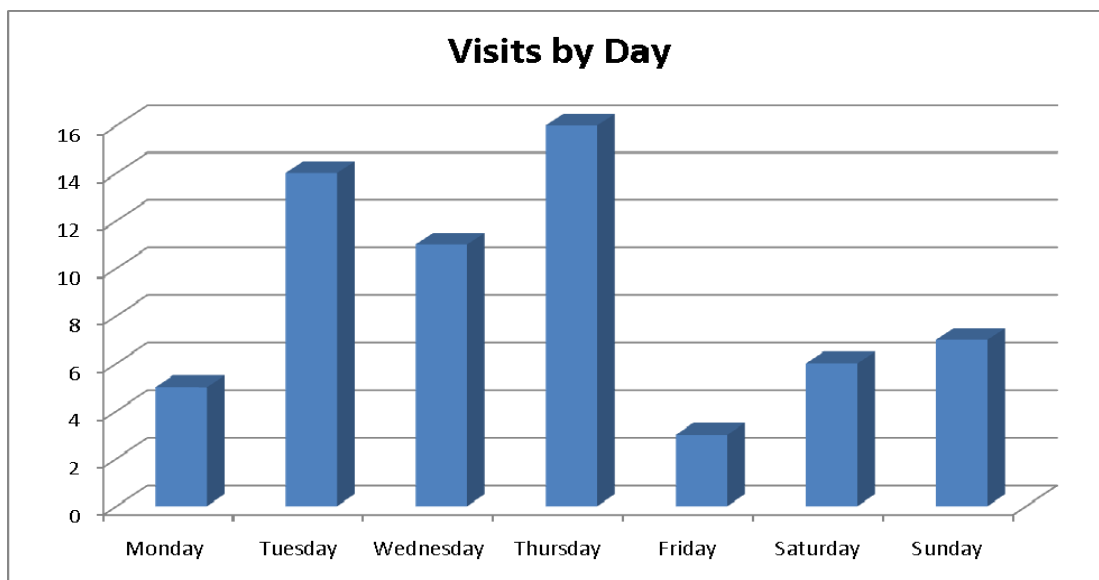
	Annual no.
0000 – 0359 hrs	
0400 – 0759 hrs	0
0800 – 1159 hrs	12
1200 – 1559 hrs	6
1600 – 1959 hrs	40
2000 – 2359 hrs	4
<i>Total</i>	62





### 3. Days of Visits

	Annual no.
Monday	5
Tuesday	14
Wednesday	11
Thursday	16
Friday	3
Saturday	6
Sunday	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>



### 4. Details of Visits

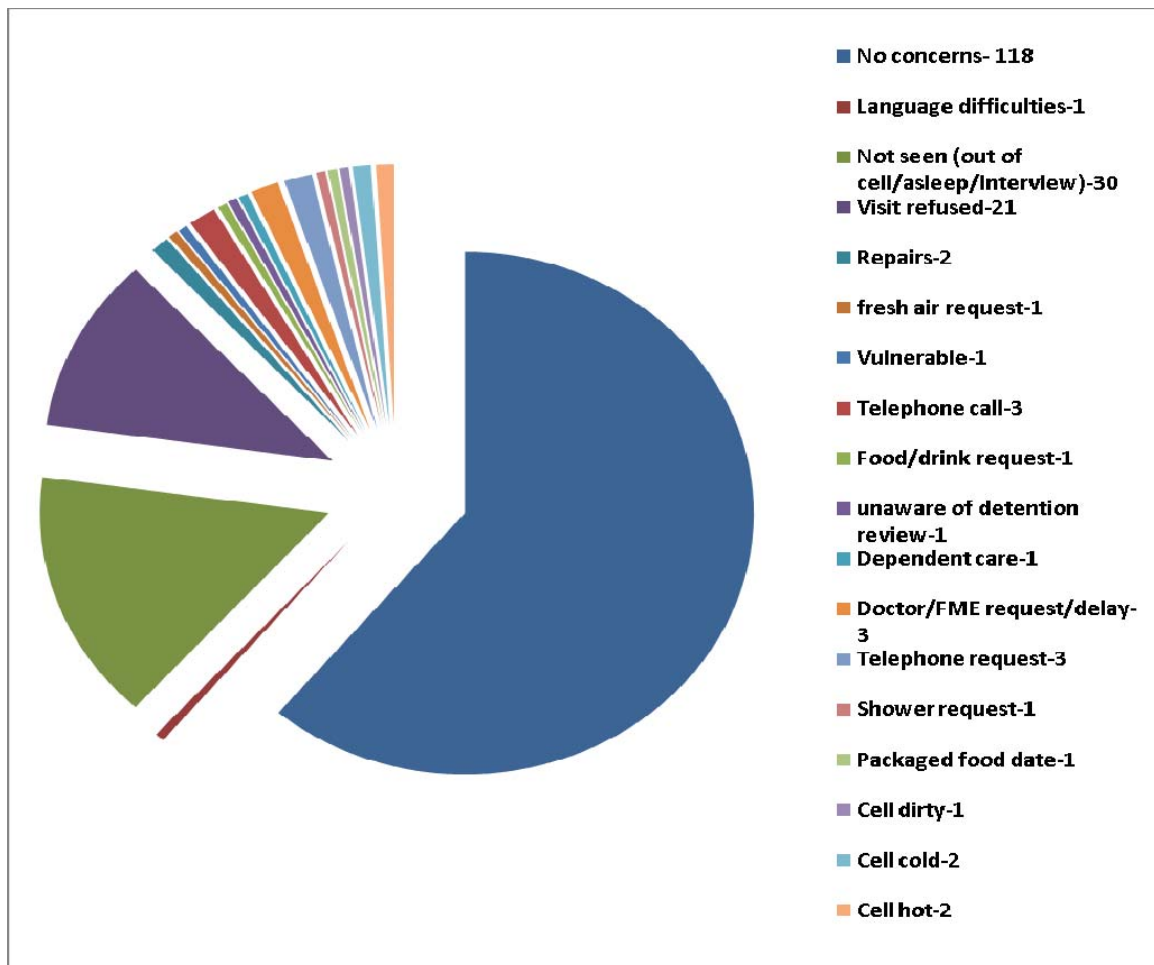
	Annual no.
<b>Detainees in custody at time of visits</b>	169
Of which:	
<b>Detainees seen</b>	101
<b>Detainees who refused to be seen</b>	21
<b>Detainees not seen-absent from cell/ asleep/interview, etc</b>	30
<b>Detainees not seen due to language or communication difficulties</b>	1

## 5. Total numbers of detainees by type

	Police data	Panel data
<b><i>Total number of detainees held in custody during 2010</i></b>	3448	169
<b><i>PACE detainees</i></b>	3415	125
<b><i>Immigration detainees</i></b>	33	6
<b><i>Other</i></b>	0	0

## 6. Details of issues raised:

The following graph is based on data taken from visit reports and reflects both concerns raised by detainees in interview, and issues raised by visitors on those occasions when they had permission to review the custody record of detainees who had refused an interview. It shows that the majority of detainees had no issues, and also gives a good overview of the types of concerns that have been raised. None of the issues is a breach of PACE regulations. No significant patterns emerge from this data and even where issues are raised they are generally of the sort that can be resolved easily.



# Targets and plans for 2011

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

- To make a total of 64 visits to the two custody suites in the borough, of which 52 to Richmond, with additional monthly visits to Teddington.
- To vary the time of visits in order to provide a good spread and in particular to try to increase the proportion of visits that are carried out between 8 pm and 8 am and reduce the number that are carried out early evening.
- 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.
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- 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 Richmond.