

Waltham Forest Independent Custody Visitors Panel

ANNUAL REPORT 2010

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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 01/01/10 to 31/12/10.

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 2010
- 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 2011.

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 makes one unannounced visit per week to the custody suite in the borough, up until November of 2010 this was at Chingford Police Station, however, this moved to a new build in Leyton where visits are now undertaken. This is the minimum requirement that the MPA sets panels as a target. This year the panel managed a visiting level of 62%, 32 out of 52 visits, which is a slight decrease on the visiting level last year.

The Waltham Forest Panel met every quarter throughout 2010, at Waltham Forest Town Hall, and this venue continues to be most satisfactory for the panel. .

The panel's police liaison changed in mid 2010 when Inspector Lisa Butterfield left custody to take up another role and ICV liaison responsibility was handed to Inspector Keith Head.

Visit reports continue to emphasise the good work and attitude of the custody staff at Chingford and now Leyton 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 2011.

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. There was an attempt to rebalance this in 2010, however, it has since slipped again and 2011 will see a focus on recruiting younger people and women to the panel in order to better reflect the diversity of Waltham Forest.

A special mention must go to Mr Bance who was awarded an ICV long service award in 2010 by the MPA.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Firstly I would like to thank all the members of the Waltham Forest ICV panel who have contributed their time to custody visiting. In 2010 we welcomed two new members to panel, however one of them has since resigned. We are hoping that 2011 will be an even more successful year with regards to recruitment and would like to have two more members to the panel. It is hoped that a full panel in terms of numbers will bring some stabilisation and that with this our number of visits will increase.

I would also like to thank the MPA for overseeing the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme and providing the funding and training which enable us to perform our community role.

2010 saw the opening of a new custody suite in Leyton and we would like to thank Inspector Head for his help in making the transition of our visits from Chingford to Leyton much easier. Thanks also go to Police custody staff in Waltham Forest, their Cooperation and assistance in often difficult circumstance is much appreciated by the panel.

Finally, the panel would like to thank Inspector Keith Head and Sergeant Helen Nolan for all their help and support in 2010.

Gurpashad Bance
Waltham Forest ICV Chair 2010

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 2010 the Waltham Forest panel had eight accredited members.

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

The following members joined the panel

Michelle Edwards	2010
Wendy Tuttle	2010

The following members resigned/de-accredited/sabbatical during 2010

Christine Williams (resigned)	2008
Jennifer Paul-Christian (sabbatical)	2007
Wendy Tuttle (resigned)	2010

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

Recruitment

Two new members were taken on in 2010 however, one of these also resigned after 6 months, therefore, there is a need to recruit one or two more members in early 2011.

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. Up until November visits were made to Chingford Station, however, in November the custody facility was closed at Chingford and a new facility was opened in Leyton, which the panel now visit.

ICVs have been happy with the way in which the jailers and Inspector Head have explained their role to detainees, and answered their queries during visits. Inspector Head was also very helpful with keeping ICVs and the MPA updated about the progress of Leyton prior to its opening and invited them for a tour of the Custody suite, which some of the ICVs accepted.

With the introduction of a whole new custody suite it might have been expected that there would have been some problems, however, the only issues the ICVs have come across is delays in entering the custody suite and these have been rare since visiting Leyton, however, the staff have made efforts to address this. It is a source of satisfaction to the panel that there have been few complaints, if any, from detainees on how they are treated in Waltham Forest.

DATA FROM PANEL VISITS

Visit statistics covering 1st January 2010 to 31st December 2010.

1. Number of visits

Station	Annual no. of visits	% of Annual Target*
Chingford	29	63%
Leyton	3	50%
Walthamstow	0	0
Total	32	62%

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

As can be seen from the above table, there were a total of 32 visits made throughout the year to Chingford and Leyton Police Stations, none were made to Walthamstow but this station is only visited if it is open and ICVs have been notified. The panel visited Chingford up until 18th November 2010, after that visits were made to Leyton.

In total throughout the year there were 185 people detained in custody at the time the ICVs did their visits, of these 69 were offered a visit and 32 accepted to be seen by the ICVs.

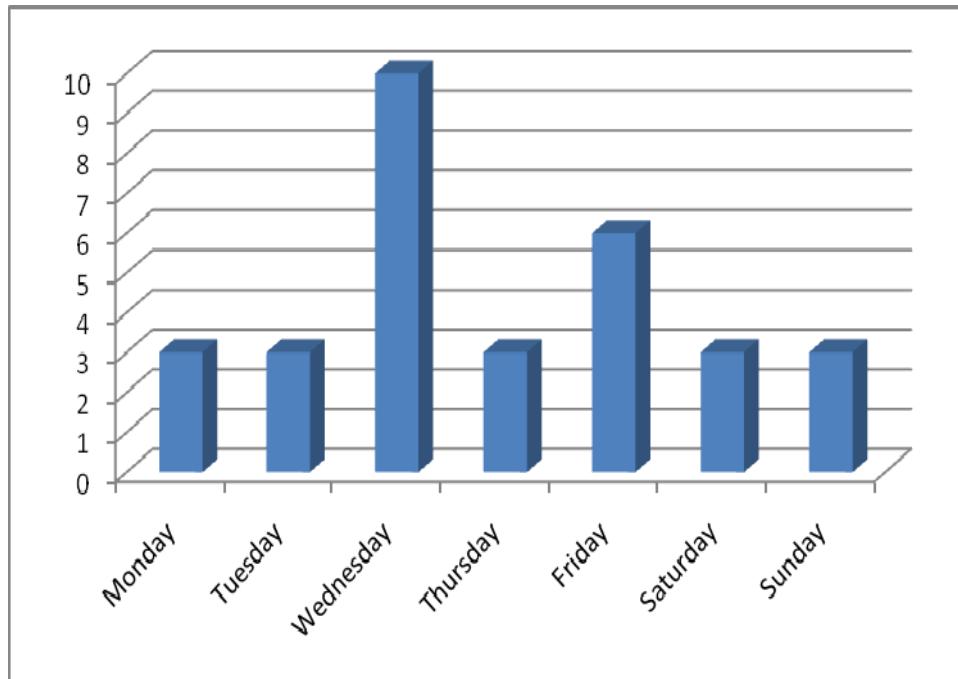
2. Time and day of visits

Independent Custody Visits are unannounced and the panel's intention is to avoid visiting in a predictable pattern.

The charts below display the number of visits carried out in the Borough of Waltham Forest in 2010, by day of the week and time period.

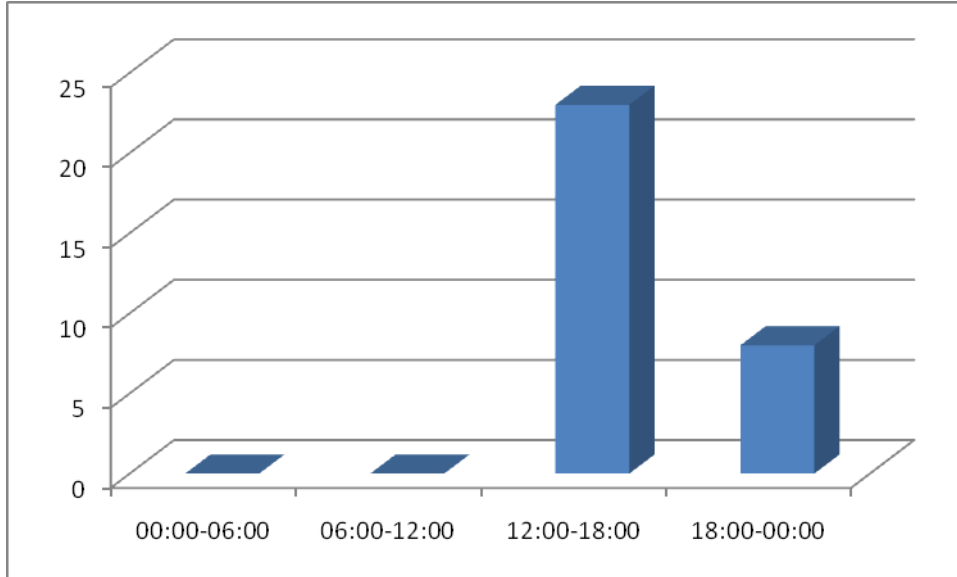
Days that visits took place

As can be seen from the graph below, most visits took place on a Wednesday, with the rest of the visits being spread more evenly across the week.



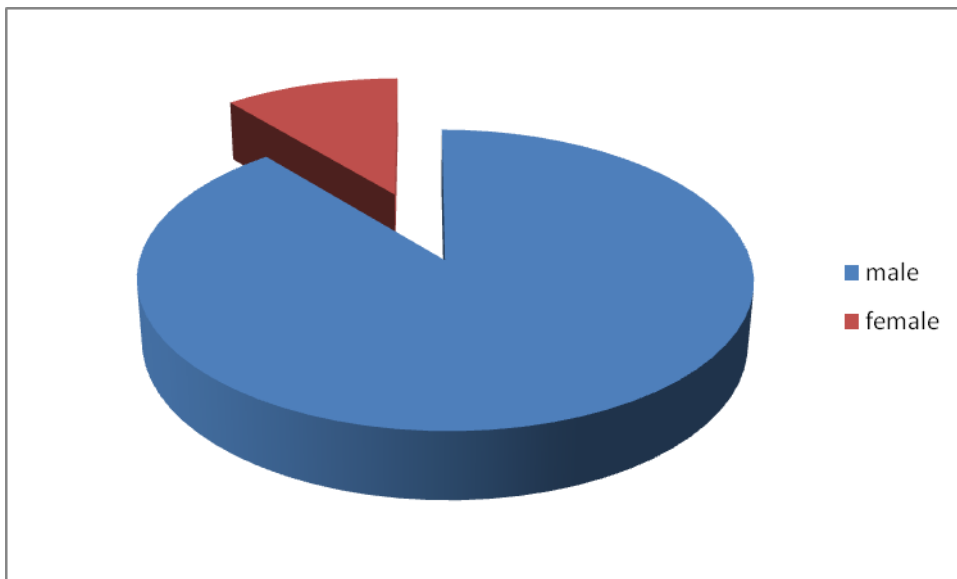
Time periods in which visits took place

As can be seen from the graph below which shows the times during the day visits took place, the most popular time for visits to be undertaken was in the afternoon to early evening. As visits are unannounced it is important that the panel attempt to avoid a regular pattern in visiting, therefore, 2011 will see a greater emphasis on visits taking place earlier in the day.

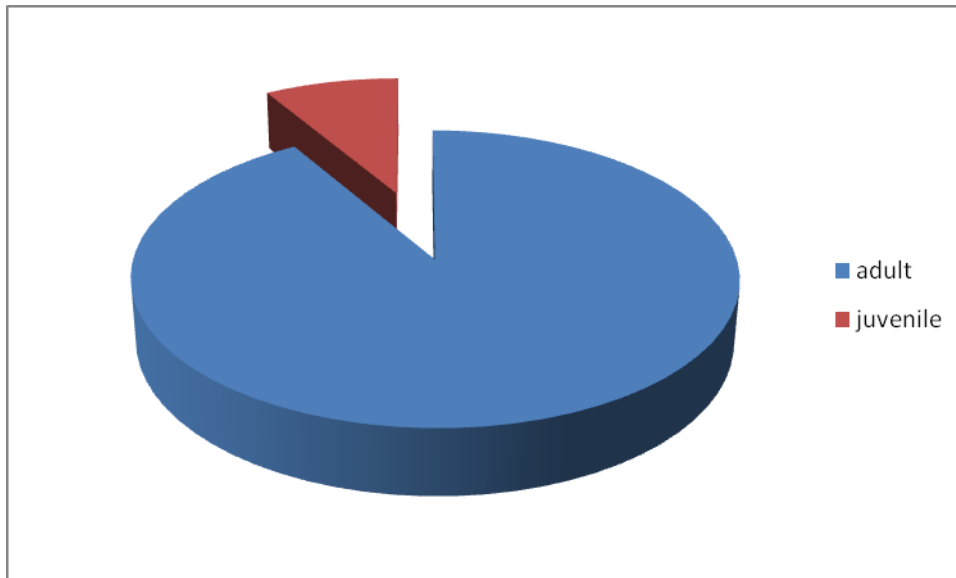


3. Detainee demographics

The pie chart below shows that the vast majority of those detained in Waltham Forest during 2010 when ICVs made their visits were male.

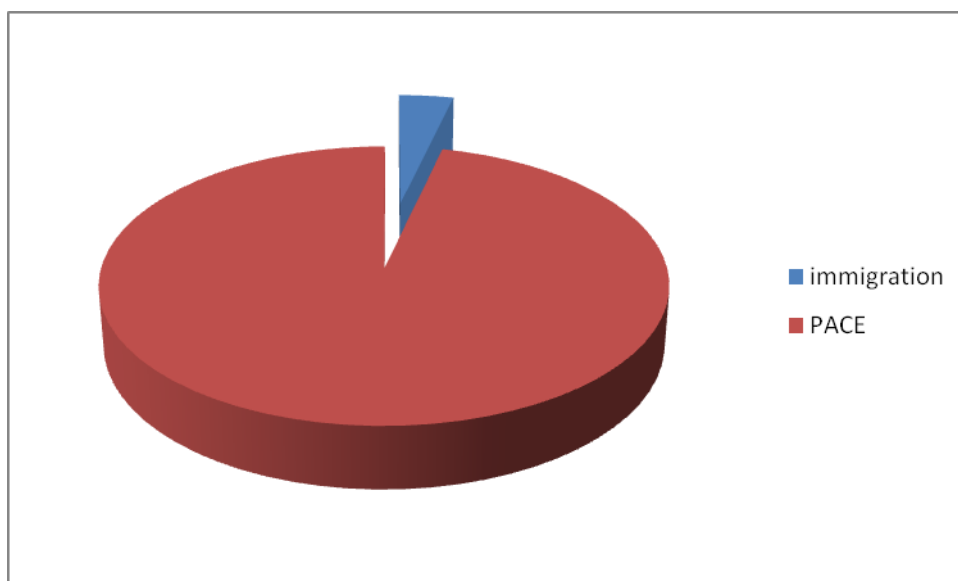


The pie chart below shows that the vast majority of those detained during the time that ICVs visited the stations in Waltham Forest were adults (over 18).



4. Categories of Detainees

The pie chart below shows which categories people held under in custody in Waltham Forest during 2010. As can be seen, the vast majority of those held were done so under PACE with a small minority being held under immigration. Other categories people may be detained under are Home Office, such as production from prison or other, such as bail to return, however, during the times that ICVs visited, no people were held under these.



5. Concerns from visits

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 and is being addressed.

PLANS FOR 2011

Targets:

- To increase last year's visiting level and aim to carry out visits once a week to Leyton Police Station in order to meet the requirements of the MPA.
- To vary the time and days that visits are done, with a greater emphasis of visits being carried out earlier in the day.
- 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 and giving presentations to other community groups.