



MPA

Metropolitan Police Authority

Bexley Independent Custody Visiting panel

Annual Report 2007/8



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Introduction

Welcome to the Annual Report of the Bexley Independent Custody Visiting Panel. The report relates to the area covered by the Borough's Operational Command Unit and the main charging station, which is Bexleyhealth police station 2 Arnsberg Way, Bexleyheath DA7 4QS. The report covers the period 1st March 2007 to 31st March 2008.

The purpose of the report is to report on the work of the Panel and to highlight those issues of concern that have arisen during the past year.

Aims and achievements

- The aim of the scheme is to ensure that the rights of the people held in police detention are upheld and to promote greater public confidence in this. The scheme is designed to improve trust, monitor, and provide an important understanding and co-operation between the police and the local community
- To continue to observe, comment and report on the conditions under which people are detained at police stations. Members will raise issues observed during their visits in accordance with the ICV Code of Practice, and bring matters to the attention of senior officers of Bexley Metropolitan Police Service (MPS)
- Members will undertake ICV duties and responsibilities in accordance with Metropolitan Police Authority London ICV handbook
- Establish stronger communications with other Bexley police officers within Bexleyhealth station. Members would like to meet other officers around the borough and raise the profile of ICV's.
- Vice Chairs to be fully trained in ICV interview skills.
- To invite more guest speaker to attend panel meeting and also for members to visit neighbouring panels

Chair's report

It has been a very interesting year since the MPA took over. We have seen a number of members leave the panel, including one who went back to Trinidad to live with his family. At one time there were only two of us doing weekly visits but, as the data in this report shows, we managed to complete a high percentage of our visits in spite of the challenges we faced. We are grateful for the support we had from the Lewisham and Bromley panels during this time. We have welcomed several new members over the past year and hope to recruit more in the coming months.

Since the MPA took over, we have had four co-ordinators and we hope that we are now entering a period of greater stability. We are very lucky to have an excellent custody sergeant in Ian Ring. We are pleased to be able to say that we have not had any major issues to raise with the police regarding the way detainees are treated at Bexleyheath police station. The whole of the custody staff are very helpful and polite and we hope to continue our good working relationship.

Last year I went to the Annual Conference of the Independent Custody Visiting Association. This was a meeting of Independent Custody Visitors from all over the UK and was a chance for us to share knowledge and ideas with each other and hear about coming changes to law and policy relating to police custody in the UK. I have also had the opportunity to engage with chairs of custody visiting panels more locally, at chairs meetings and local cluster meetings.

At the end of March 2008 we had the sad news of a death in custody at Bexleyheath Police Station. The Duty Inspector phoned to ask if I would like to meet with the Borough Commander to talk about what had happened. I was shown where the death had occurred and invited to the Gold group later in the day with members of the IPCC and MPS. Although an event of this kind is of course sad for all concerned our impression is that the police acted in a professional and open manner.

As chair of the Bexley Independent Custody Visitors I attend the local Community and Police Engagement Group, which meets four times a year. These meetings are an opportunity for representatives of the community to discuss policing and crime in their area with the police service, police authority and other key stakeholders. Independent Custody Visiting plays a key role in reassuring the local community that the police treat detainees in a fair and professional manner. This area of work is very important to the Bexley panel and in the coming year we hope to attend more events and meetings that will raise awareness locally of the work we do.

Carol Fletcher

Metropolitan Police Authority

Throughout the year Bexley has been supported by MPA officers Cindy Macrae (ICV Coordinator) and Adela Wegrzynski (ICV Support Officer). A new MPA ICV Coordinator, Laura del Nevo has recently been appointed and will take over full responsibilities for Croydon, Lewisham, Bexley and Bromley panels as of end of Sept 08

MPA support to panel has continued throughout the years in the form of:

- Maintaining communication between all ICV panel's network by publication and distribution of MPA London wide newsletter to all members
- Continuation of recruitment campaign which has helped increase panel membership
- Provision of initial training program to all new members
- Regular monitoring of station reports feedback and liaison with local MPS representative.
- Monitor members meeting and station visiting attendance statistics for submission to panel Executive Officers
- Promotion of London ICV Conference, 26th April 08 at the Riverbank Bank Park Plaza Hotel, Vauxhall. Conference summary issued in ICV newsletter.
- MPA requested members to complete a Diversity Monitoring project.

The Panel has a current panel membership of 4 who currently consist of 2 male and 2 female members. Further recruitment is still underway with an additional two vetting applications pending. As the panel covers one station a full complement membership would ideally be 6 to 8 maximum.

Current membership:

Carol Fletcher -Chair

Phil Munro – Acting Vice Chair

Barbra Rosam – Acting Vice Chair

Joseph Sheridan

Trilok Bhalla (Member of Lewisham panel, currently assisting Bexley panel)

Outgoing ICV members include: Erwin John Shaw and Vivien Johnson and the long-standing member Bernard Hanks.

Members of the Bromley ICV panel have also assisted the panel throughout the year: Margaret Gubbins (Chair) and Brenda Rayson (Vice Chair). The panel would like to thank them for their personal commitment to assisting the panel with training when membership was low.

Visits to Police Stations

The panel has maintained its positive relationship with Bexley MPS and would like to thank Sgt Ian Ring who has been the sole MPS representative and regularly attends the panel meetings.

Sgt Ring has not only taken personal responsibility for handling enquiries from members, but has often made an extra effort to respond or resolve matters arising instantly. The panel would like to note their appreciation to Sgt Ring for all his hard work and support.

The panel would also like to make a special note of thanks to the many individual officers, who have been recognised and noted at panel meeting, throughout the year, as they have shown an exceptionally high standard of support to ICV members during their visits. The panel understands the importance of showing appreciation to these officers, and have been assured that our praise has been delivered to relevant officers, via the attending Senior Officers

Issues that have occurred during the year include:

- The introduction of the new NSPIS computerised system that is now in place and initial teething problems appear to have disappeared.
- Death in Custody (April 08) - Chair was informed immediately of this situation, shown the scene of the incident and attended a Gold meeting with IPCC (Independent Police Complaints Commission) Metropolitan Police Service and Directorate of Professional Standards (DPS). The Chair was satisfied that all appropriate action had been taken.
- Recurring problems relating to cleanliness, storage and delayed access, many of which have been actioned effectively by the officers on duty.

Objectives

- **To increase the number of visits accepted by detainees. The panel recently submitted a request to be part of an MPA Self Introduction pilot scheme.**
- **To invite guest speakers to panel meetings. Members have expressed an interest to promote their panel within the local borough community network. Members wish to invite a minimum of 5 speakers over the next year 08/09 to attend the panel meetings for presentations. Invitations could be forwarded to Drugs Worker's, Senior FME, Appropriate Adults, Neighbouring ICV panels, or other organisations with a common interest.**
- **To improve relations and share good practice and improve relationship with Bexley Community Police Consultative Group (BCPCG).**
- **To improve flexibility of the ICV station visiting time periods to allow for the varied station MPS shift patterns i.e. late night visits/ morning or weekday visits**
- **To continue to undertake training for new members, by encouraging experienced members to become more actively involved in shadow training. Also to explore new training opportunities and pass on knowledge to existing members.**
- **To recruit new members to the panel who will represent the community in the important work of custody visiting.**

Data from panel visits

Figures may be subject to anomalies in report forms e.g. missing info on visit report forms.

1. Number of Visits – Bexleyheath station only

Number of visits conducted	Total 47
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2. Visit times

Time slots	No. of visits conducted
0000 – 0359 hrs	
0400 – 0759 hrs	
0800 – 1159 hrs	13
1200 – 1559 hrs	6
1600 – 1959 hrs	4
2000 – 2359 hrs	24

3. Visits Days

Days	No. of visits conducted
Monday	11
Tuesday	5
Wednesday	10
Thursday	6
Friday	9
Saturday	5
Sunday	1

4. Visit duration

	No. of visits conducted
Less than 30 mins	3
30 – 60 mins	13
60 – 90 mins	13
90-120 mins	8
More than 120 mins	8

5. Visit and detainee details

Number of detainees at time of visits	235
PACE detainees	198
Immigration detainees	6
Other	2
Detainees seen	96