



**MPA**

**Metropolitan Police Authority**

**Greenwich  
Independent Custody  
Visiting Panel**

**Annual Report 2007**



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# Introduction

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

The report covers the period from January 2007 to December 2007

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 2008

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 scrutinize 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 Greenwich, 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's annual report covers the period January 2007 to December 2007. This new reporting arrangement brings Greenwich in line with other parts of the London ICV Scheme.

# Chairperson's report

I am privileged to write the forward for the first ever annual report for the Greenwich Independent Custody Visiting Panel.

Greenwich Independent Custody panel has gone through a very difficult and tough time in previous years; I would be ungrateful if I were not to say my sincere thanks to those committed few who have remained with the panel in this report.

Losses to the number of custody visitors in 2007 had left the panel depleted with only three trained and active members at one point which meant meeting our aims and objectives particularly difficult.

Changes to administration staff at the MPA presented another challenge to the panel but with a new team in place, a recruitment campaign was carried out which brought new members to the panel at the end of the year.

We on the panel have always been keen to recruit volunteers from a wider community background in order to have membership from all different cultural backgrounds and I proudly can say that we have some success in this and will continue to welcome people from minority communities.

I am very grateful for all the members who supported me as Chair and dedicated their time for the panel in carrying out its role.

My sincere thanks goes to Greenwich Council for providing us a great venue for our meetings and must not forget our current acting Vice Chair who has given me support in all matters regarding the ICV panel.

I also like to pass my thanks to Jennifer Ankrah and our current administration staff who made it possible to have our first annual report published.

Brian (Akram) Haq  
Chair, Greenwich Independent Custody Visiting Panel

# 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.

In the previous annual report the following specific aims and objectives were set out for 2007:

- To maintain a programme of weekly visits to Plumstead police station at variable times including occasional night visits
- To include visits to Greenwich police station when required
- To hold bi-monthly panel meetings
- To continue to monitor the standards of cleaning and the temperature of cells and the provision for detainees' hygiene needs
- To maintain and improve upon the level of communication with Greenwich police, the custody manager during panel meetings and custody staff during visits
- To recruit more people to the panel, in particular younger people
- To ensure that the panel reflects the diversity of the borough
- To attend local events such as summer fairs to increase public awareness, publicise the work of the panel and to recruit new members
- To enable panel members to attend refresher training courses and to use the panel meetings as an opportunity to provide training

The panel made a total of 10 visits throughout 2007 to police stations in the borough of Greenwich. Against a target of 52 visits to be carried out during the year at a rate of one visit per week, this represents an achievement of 19.23% of the annual target.

The number of recorded visits carried out during the year is significantly below the target of 90% and will need to be drastically improved in 2008.

Greenwich has experienced a number of difficulties in performing these visits, not least the fact that for much of the year the Greenwich panel was severely depleted of custody visitors. There have only been three committed members able to visit custody suites for much of the year. Two volunteers were trained and ready for visits in October 2007 but there was limited capacity within the panel to escort new ICVs on visits and to train them. A third member was interviewed and accepted on to the panel but would not complete basic training until January 2008.

The required number of visitors for a panel visiting one station is 10 and by the end of the year, there were just 5 members, making it very difficult for visits to take place on their scheduled weekly basis.

The MPA made it a top priority to interview and recruit new members to the panel throughout 2007 and into 2008 to try and rectify this situation.

Adverts were placed in newspapers and in the Metro seeking applications with current members taking steps to try and recruit colleagues and aiding in recruitment in their local area.

Nine application forms were received for consideration over the New Year from a broad cross section of the local community and across a range of ages, which is positive in regard to the panel's equal opportunities policy. It is hoped that by April 2008 the panel will be at, or near full strength and the number of visits will have increased considerably.

Fundamental to the functionality of the scheme in any borough is the administration that is provided and due to a number of changes in staff at the MPA, continuity and consistency of facilitation was temporarily disrupted. However, a permanent administration team is now in place and this will unequivocally help in enabling the panel to function accordingly.

In the majority of cases of visits that did take place, there were no significant issues raised. However, there are some recurring concerns identified from the visit report forms. Of most common occurrence was the issue surrounding cleanliness of the shower and wash areas.

Despite the small number of visits carried out, they were relatively well distributed throughout the week, although no visits were carried out on a Tuesday.

The distribution of visits throughout the day is mostly restricted to daytime visits occurring between the hours of 0800-1959 with only one visit taking place outside of this timeframe. No visits were carried out between 20:00-03:59 and this statistic will have to be improved upon in 2008. Whilst it is appreciated that these are unsocial hours and detainees are often taking advantage of their continuous rest period, it is still essential that some visits are carried during these quieter periods over the course of the year.

Relations with the police remain somewhat limited and there is considerable scope to improve effective communication and engagement with the police and custody staff.

# 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, faiths, races, genders, sexualities, abilities and age on the panel.

Greenwich has been under-resourced for much of 2007 and although new members were recruited during 2007, three of these were in the final quarter of the year.

With an improved marketing and advertising strategy for 2008, and in continually developing partnerships and investigating new avenues to recruit, it is hoped that 2008 will see continued success in recruitment and retention to bring panel numbers to a satisfactory level.

The panel welcomes applications from all sections of the community in line with stated policy. It is hoped that future recruitment will result in an increased number younger people. New initiatives will be needed both to target different types of people and to increase the take up of the role.

# Visits to police stations

There are three custody suites in the borough at Greenwich, although Greenwich and Catford do not operate full time. They are, however, used for overflow purposes, when the main station is closed, or occasionally under Operation Safeguard.

The panel makes weekly, unannounced visits to Plumstead police station.

The majority of our reports have not raised any significant issues that have required the attention of the MPA or which required a response from the local police. However, there are a couple of issues that are frequently raised:

- The continued concern over detainees' access to showers and washing facilities.
- A number of concerns about general and more acute unclean and untidy areas within custody.

Fortunately no significant issues have been raised in 2007 that have required intervention and ICVs have been well received and accommodated by Custody Staff on their visits.

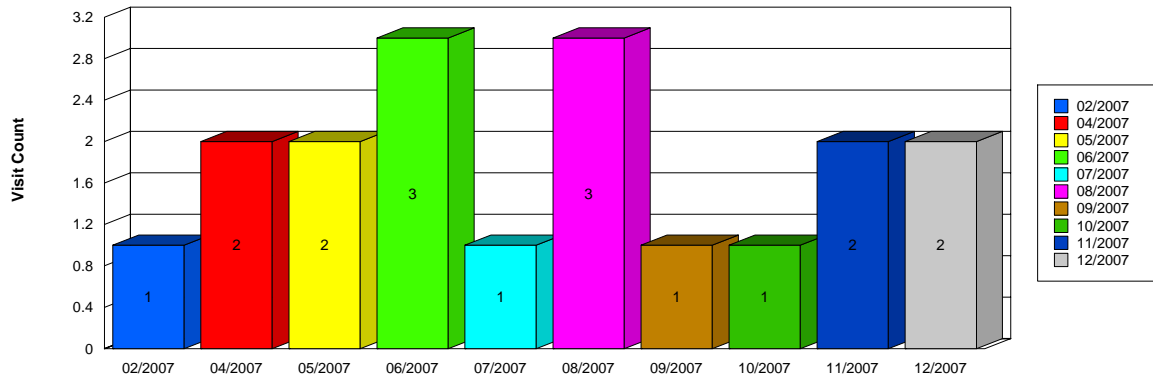


# Data from panel visits

## 1. Number of Visits

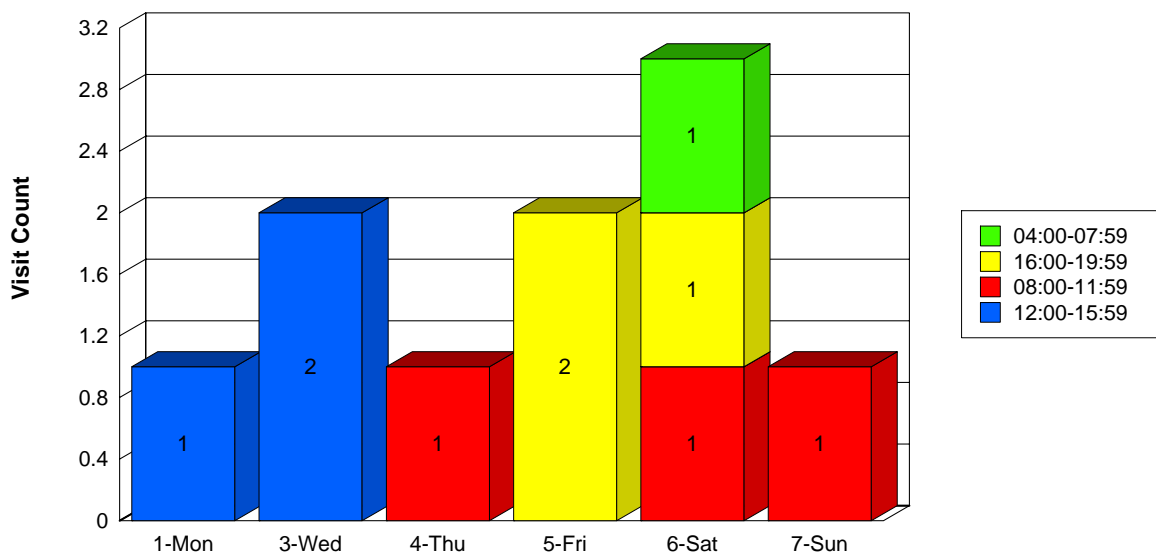
Station	Annual no. of visits	% of Annual Target*
Plumstead & Greenwich	10	19.23

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



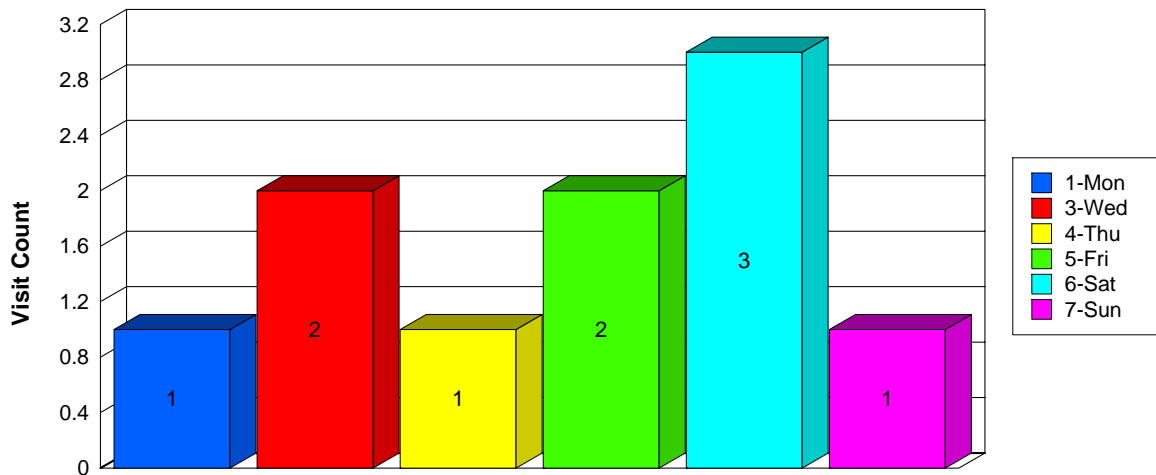
## 2. Time of Visits

Time Period	Annual no.	% of all visits
0000 – 0359 hrs	0	0
0400 – 0759 hrs	1	10
0800 – 1159 hrs	3	30
1200 – 1559 hrs	3	30
1600 – 1959 hrs	3	30
2000 – 2359 hrs	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>

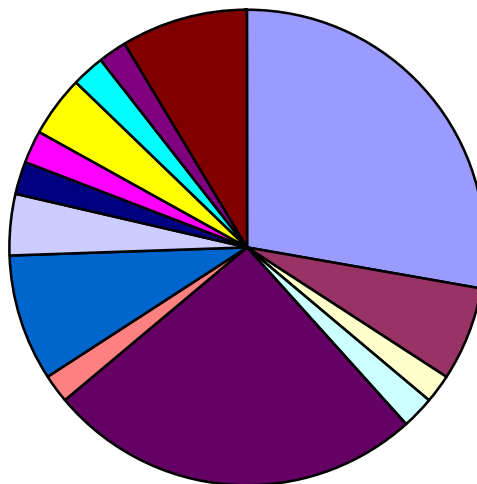


3. Days of Visits

Day	Annual no.	% of all visits
Monday	1	10
Tuesday	0	0
Wednesday	2	20
Thursday	1	10
Friday	2	20
Saturday	3	30
Sunday	1	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>



4. Details of detainees' concerns:



■ No complaints	■ Medical Attention	■ Blanket
■ Cigarette	■ Legal Advice	■ Relative Informed
■ Immigration	■ In Interview/Out of Cell	■ Washing facilities
■ Alleged Assault	■ Request Food/Drink	■ Toilet facilities
■ Visit Refused	■ Telephone Call	

# Plans for forthcoming year 2008

The Panel's aims and objectives for 2008 are as follows:

- To make a total of 52 visits to Plumstead custody suite and occasional visits to Greenwich when in use.
- To vary the days of the week on which visits are made.
- To vary the times of visits in order to provide a better distribution of visits over 24 hours, particularly between the hours of 20:00-07:59.
- To improve the level of communication and engagement with Greenwich police.
- 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.
- 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 Greenwich across all strands.
- To investigate new initiatives designed to target different types of people and increase the take up of the ICV role.