



MPA

Metropolitan Police Authority

Camden Independent Custody Visiting Panel

Annual Report 2008



Contents

1. Introduction
2. Aims & achievements
3. Recruitment and membership
4. Chair's report
5. Visits to Police Stations
6. Panel data – also see Appendices
7. Targets and plans for Forthcoming Year

Introduction

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

The report covers a period from January 2008 to December 2008

The purpose of the report is to:

- Evaluate the panel's performance
- 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 2009

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 Camden, 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 Camden in line with other parts of the London ICV Scheme.

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.

The Camden panel currently schedules one visit per week to each of the 24/7 MPS Police Stations in the borough – Holborn (EO) and Kentish Town (EK) Stations – with custody suites. By arrangement the panel schedules one visit a week to the British Transport Police (BTP) station at Tottenham Court Road. One visit a week per station is the visit frequency required of the panel by the Metropolitan Police Authority. During 2008 the panel managed a visiting level of over 75% for all of the three stations – BTP 71%; EO 71%; and EK 85%.

The membership of the panel at the end of the year stood at 15 though at a few points in time during the year it was higher. This is under the optimum panel size of 26 members which is desirable for a borough with three 24/7 facilities. It has meant that the panel members have had the higher workload of a visit every 3 weeks which it has struggled to fulfil at times.

A new Custody Manager, Inspector Duncan McKinlay took over from Inspector Pat Moore and the positive working relationship with the panel has been built upon. In addition a new Chief Inspector of Operations, Sean Wilson took office in the latter part of the year. He put in place the Camden Custody Steering Group of which the Camden ICV Panel Chair is a member. The ICV panel is also represented on the Camden Custody Users Group by a member.

The panel met 6 times during the year at Camden Town Hall. This venue has proved to be generally satisfactory but there is only one committee room with a loop system. This is booked whenever possible. The meeting frequency will be one panel meeting every six weeks into 2009.

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.

During the latter part of 2007 the membership of the panel steadily decreased and the recruitment of new members proved difficult. However, a concerted recruitment exercise was undertaken that began to bear fruit in early 2008. It has been a longstanding objective of the panel to have a membership of approximately 25. This was not achieved in 2008 but the panel finished the year with 15 members. 14 members were recruited and six members resigned.

The panel has always endeavoured to be broadly representative of Camden and has in 2008 had some success in beginning to match the borough profile. The panel has become generally younger and now has a less unequal split of male and female members.

The following members undertook visits for the panel during 2008.

Name	Appointed during 2008	
Suzanne Idehen, Chair		
Jane Atkinson		
Dinah Gallop		
Christel Linden		
Michael Hennessey		
Nina Ariff	4 February	
Sophie Spells	13 February	
Laura Sarkis	27 February	
Conor O'Luby	7 March	
Joe Aikins	21 March	
Jacob Head	2 April	
Sarah Smith	14 May	
Becca Smalldon	9 May	
Lily Silvertown	14 September	
Alan Ward	24 October	
Resigned		(Date of last visit)
<i>Elisa Nay</i>		<i>17 January 2008</i>
<i>Helen Tideswell</i>		<i>29 May 2008</i>
<i>Lydia Gibbs</i>	<i>3 January</i>	<i>18 June 2008</i>
<i>Rhonda Cullen</i>	<i>1 May</i>	<i>4 September 2008</i>
<i>Patricia White</i>	<i>16 May</i>	<i>4 July 2008</i>
<i>Lettie Smithers</i>	<i>23 May</i>	<i>15 August 2008</i>

Recruitment remained a priority with applications being steadily received at the end of the year.

Chair's report

The year 2008 was a significant one for custody visiting in Camden. It began with the panel in a somewhat vulnerable state with only a few visitors. Following a focused recruitment campaign the panel membership grew quickly. This brought problems with it in that there was a shortfall of experienced ICVs to induct the newcomers and the workload experienced by the longer term ICVs was considerable. The panel was fortunate in being able to call on the help of visitors from other panels to visit with the new ICVs. I would like to give particular thanks should be given to members of the Islington panel who provided considerable support over the year. I would like to say a big thanks to the entire panel especially all of the long-standing members for staying with me through thick and thin in what has been a massive task.

The panel was fortunate in that several of the newcomers were very motivated and learnt the role quickly. The six-weekly panel meetings have benefitted from this influx of new, enthusiastic members and have become better focused and more productive. As the year wore on the panel became a more cohesive unit. At this point I would like to thank Tony Hawker, the ICV Coordinator – who came into post at a difficult time for the panel – for his hard work, impartiality and clear vision of how the meetings should be.

Because of the difficulties described above, the panel did not fully meet its planned visiting target of one visit per week to each of its 24/7 stations. This was partly due to the overall inexperience of the panel. However, many of the panel members did more than was expected of them and made visits extra to the ones that they were rostered to do. Except for the months of August and September the performance improved generally as the year wore on.

At the start of the year, Inspector Pat Moore moved out of post and was replaced by Inspector Duncan McKinlay as the new Custody Manager. Also, a new Chief Inspector of Operations, Sean Wilson took office. I would like to say a big thank you to Mr Wilson for bringing expertise and a new energy to custody in Camden. The police demonstrated their continued willingness to engage fully and transparently with the panel and, over the latter part of the year, included ICV representatives in initiatives such as the Camden Custody Steering group and the Custody Users Forum.

The panel was one of four chosen out of nineteen panels to take part in a 'self introduction' pilot. The pilot has been undertaken to see if more detainees are likely to accept visit from ICVs if they are introduced by themselves rather than the escorting officer. The pilot has been popular with the majority of ICVs who have taken part, at Camden and elsewhere, and is likely to be extended to other boroughs before a decision is made whether to roll it out across London or not.

In summary, I would like to say that the journey to the current healthy state of the panel has been long and hard. It has been fraught with difficulty but it has been worth it. The Camden ICV panel remains committed and passionate in the service and reassurance it provides to the communities of the borough.

Suzanne Idehen, Panel Chair.

Visits to police stations

During 2008 the numbers of detainees held in Camden facilities were as follows:

- MPS sites 10,616 (Holborn – 6,027; Kentish Town – 4,477; Albany Street – 112)
- BTP Tottenham Court Road – 4,500

Number of visits

The panel averaged nearly 78% of their planned visits to the two 24/7 MPS custody suites and 71% of their visits to the BTP Tottenham Court Road suite during 2008

Detainee concerns

There have been few major concerns voiced by detainees interviewed during 2008. Of all detainees who accepted a visit, 42% had no complaints about their treatment while detained. The three main issues most reported to ICVs by detainees were not receiving their rights and entitlements such as not having a relative informed of their whereabouts (15%), not having been offered food and drink (7%); requests for or concerns about medical care (6%). The majority of these or other concerns raised by detainees were resolved to the satisfaction of the ICVs at the time of the visit.

Matters requiring a Police response

The majority of matters requiring a police response to the panel (i.e. those listed on part 1 of the visit report form) concerned the following. Non-functioning or damage to elements of the infrastructure, equipment, decorations and furnishings. Cleaning and tidiness in the custody suite was also frequently of concern. After this, the FME service generated the single most requests for responses. This was usually concern over the time taken between a call made for an FME to attend and his/her arrival at the custody suite. Also the state of the facilities in the FME room was criticised on occasions. Problems with NSPIS were cited, both incorrect record keeping and the difficulty of obtaining printouts for use by ICVs. The remainder included: procedures not being followed or rights being delayed; risks to detainees being identified; requests for food, drink and opportunities for washing.

All of the issues identified were followed up at the panel meetings.

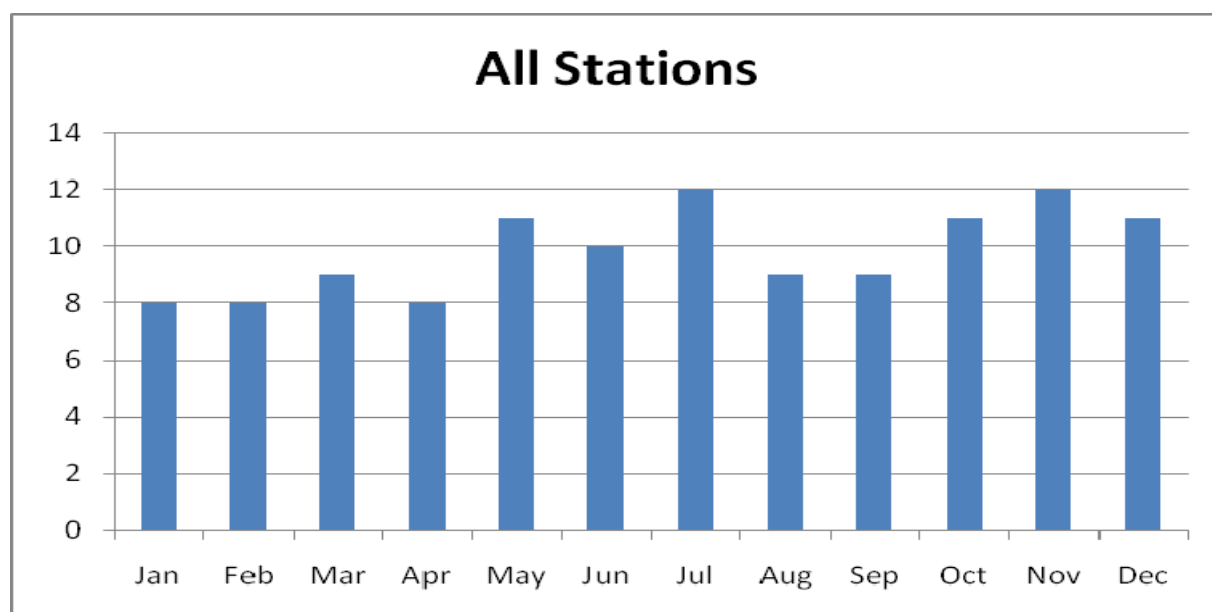
Data from panel visits

1. Number of Visits (All Stations):

Station	Annual no. of visits	% of annual target
MPS		
Holborn	37	71%
Kentish Town	44	86%
Albany Street (Overflow)	0	-
BTP		
Tottenham Court Road	37	71%
Total	118	-

2. Breakdown by month of visits undertaken in London borough of Camden during 2008:

MPS	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Holborn	1	4	1	3	4	3	4	3	3	4	4	3
Kentish Town	5	4	5	2	4	3	4	3	2	4	4	4
Total MPS	6	8	6	5	8	6	8	6	5	8	8	7
BTP												
Tottenham Ct Rd	2	0	3	3	3	4	4	3	4	3	4	4
Total visits	8	8	9	8	11	10	12	9	9	11	12	11

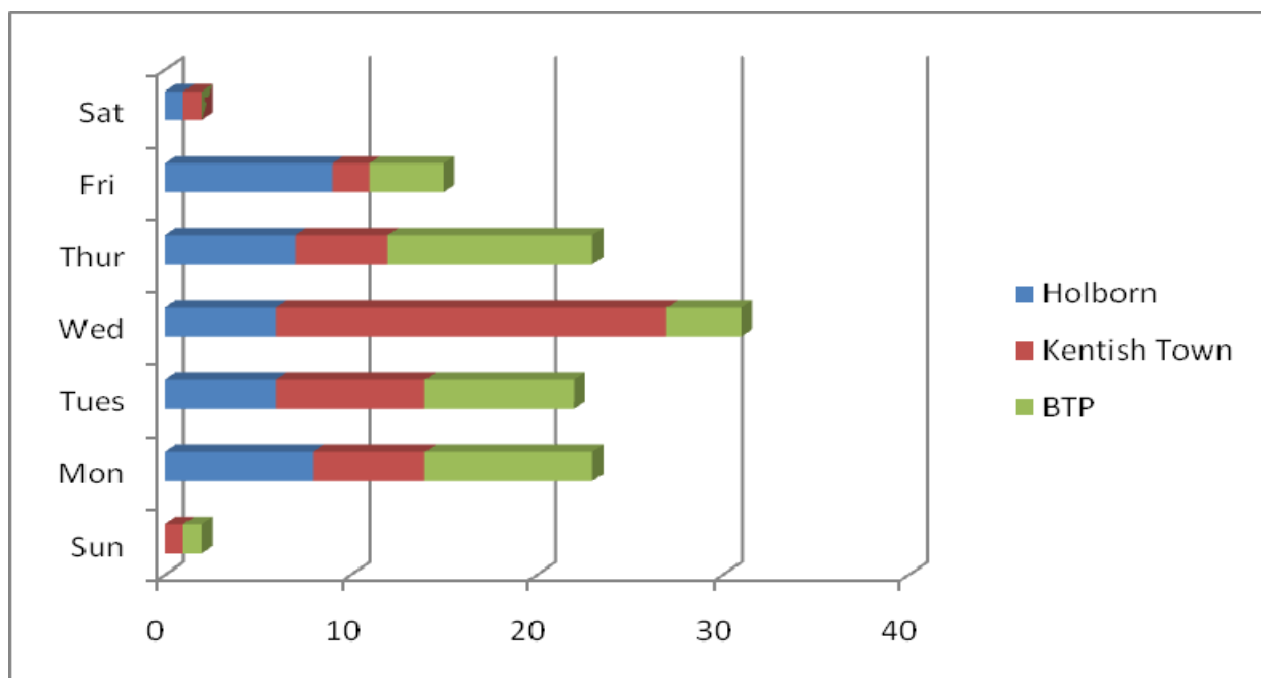


3. Time of Visits (MPS only)

Time range	BTP	Holborn	Kentish Town	Total	%
00:01 - 03:00	0	0	0	0	-
03:01 - 06:00	1	0	0	1	0.8%
06:01 - 09:00	0	1	0	1	0.8%
09:01 - 12:00	4	7	9	20	17%
12:01 - 15:00	12	7	5	24	20%
15:01 - 18:00	9	11	10	30	25%
18:01 - 21:00	9	10	20	39	33%
21:01 - 00:00	2	1	0	3	3%
	37	37	44	118	

4. Days of Visits. Annual number on each day of the week.

	SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
Holborn	0	8	6	6	7	9	1
Kentish Town	1	6	8	21	5	2	1
BTP	1	9	8	4	11	4	0
Total	2	23	22	31	23	15	2
%	1.7%	19%	19%	26%	19%	13%	1.7%



5. Details of Visits

MPS Stations

		PACE	Imm	Other	Total
Total held at time of visits	539	-	-	-	
Those offered a visit		399	22	9	430
Those who accepted the visit		224	17	1	242
Those who refused the visit		175	5	8	188

Breakdown of detainees (MPS)

Males (adult)	446
Males (juveniles)	50
Females (adult)	44
Female (juveniles)	3

BTP Tottenham Ct Rd Station

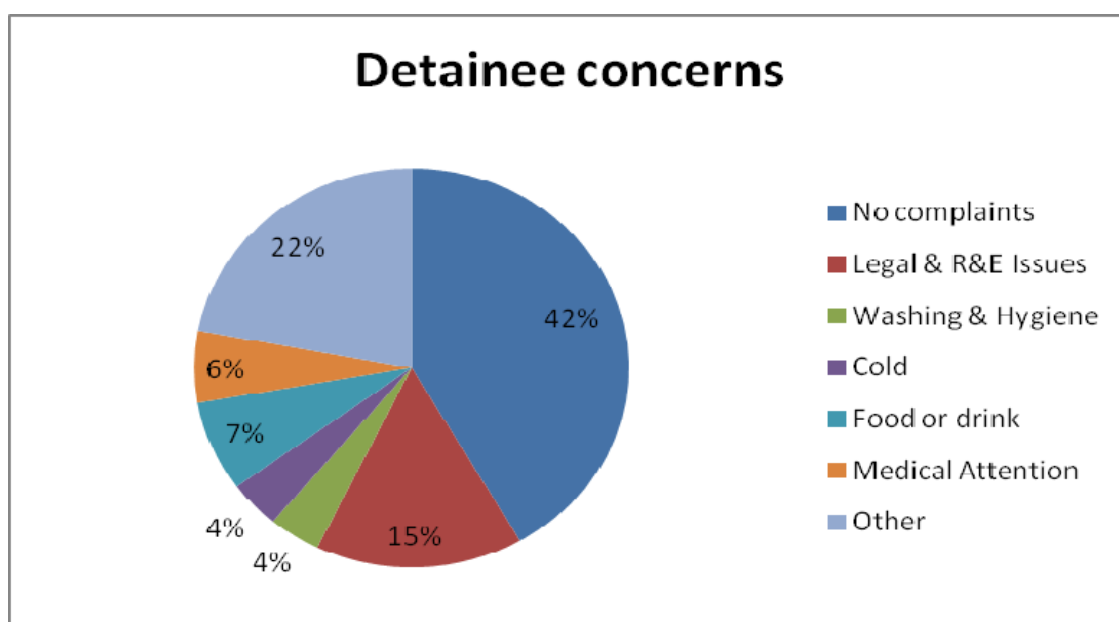
		PACE	Imm	Other	Total
Total held at time of visits	166				
Those offered a visit		100	14	1	115
Those who accepted the visit		76	12	0	88
Those who refused the visit		24	2	1	27

Breakdown of detainees (BTP)

Males (adult)	141
Males (juveniles)	6
Females (adult)	18
Female (juveniles)	1

6. Details of concerns raised by detainees in Camden MPS custody suites in 2008

n.b. BTP visits are not logged on the ICV database and percentages are not available



7. Details of issues raised during visits requiring a police response (matters listed on part 1 of the visit report forms).

The majority of the panel's visit reports did not raise major issues that were not resolved at the time of the visit. Those issues that were recorded as 'requiring a police response' fell into the following general categories. (The incidences recorded were as one per report form rather than a total of individual occurrences mentioned in per report form.)

- Problems reported concerned with the infrastructure and furnishings in the custody suites. These were wide ranging, including: graffiti, damage to plaster in cells, faulty plumbing, non-operational entry phones and damaged mattresses
- General tidiness and cleanliness in the custody areas – cells and rooms.
- Custody Officers mentioned both negative and positive reports
- Matters relating to FME service. These included both the service provided by FMEs – their attendance times etc – and also the condition of FME facilities and equipment.
- Temperature in the custody areas/cells and availability of blankets.
- Debris seen in the cells such as articles of clothing and old food containers
- Risks to detainees/staff identified both specifically and generally
- Problems with the use of NSPIS
- Procedural issues such as periodic checks not being maintained and issues concerning detainee rights and entitlements such as notifying relative of detention, requests for food, drink and opportunities for washing.

	BTP	MPS
Report forms with no matters requiring a police response	28	38
Infrastructure/furnishings/fittings	2	9
Cleaning, tidiness and general hygiene	1	10
Officer mentioned	0	4
FME Service and FME room	2	11
Temperature and availability of blankets	0	3
Detainee rights – delays/procedures not followed etc	1	7
Periodic checks (15, 30 minute etc) not maintained	0	1
NSPIS	0	5
Risks identified	2	7
Requests for food & drink	0	5
Personal hygiene – requests for washing facilities	2	1
Other	0	8

Plans for forthcoming year 2009

The Panel's aims and objectives for 2009 are as follows:

- To make a total of 156 visits to the three custody suites in the borough, and make additional visits to overflow sites where necessary.
- To vary the day and time of visits in order to provide a better spread. Firstly, to spread visits evenly over the days of the week with 10% of visits taking place on Saturday and 10% on Sunday. And secondly, to ensure that a minimum of 10% of visits are carried out between 20:00 and 04:00.
- 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 and independently, 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 Camden.
- To continue to actively support improvements in custody including improvements to the built infrastructure such a purpose-built custody facility in Camden.