

London Independent Custody Visiting Scheme

Annual Report 2008



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Foreword by MPA Vice Chair Kit Malthouse

Welcome to the 2008 annual report of the London Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) Scheme.

The Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) exists to ensure that the police are accountable for the services they provide to people in the capital. The Authority has been given a number of statutory responsibilities, including under paragraph 51 of the Police Reform Act 2002, the management of the independent custody visiting scheme.

The independent custody visiting scheme, formerly known as the Lay Visitors' scheme, was introduced in the mid-1980s following a recommendation in Lord Scarman's report into the civil disorders in Brixton and other parts of the UK. He recommended a system of independent, unannounced inspection of procedures and detention in police stations by local community members. Since then, panels of independent custody visitors have evolved throughout the United Kingdom as an important means of securing police accountability for the local communities they serve.

Independent custody visitors play a role in bringing police and communities closer together and enhancing public perception of police procedures and practices in relation to custody. It is now mandatory for each police authority in the country to have a custody visiting scheme in place.

The purpose of this report is to give a general overview of the work of the London ICV Scheme.

As of December 2008, the MPA had 401 volunteers across London giving up their free time to provide independent scrutiny of the treatment of those held in police detention and the conditions in which they are held. Twenty-five years on from Lord Scarman's report it is as important as ever that Londoners have confidence in the police. Independent custody visiting continues to be crucial in helping to build and maintain community confidence in this significant area of policing.

I would like to thank all our volunteers for their dedication and hard work throughout 2008. The MPA and the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) appreciate the vital contribution they make to help improve the standard of custody provision in London.

Kit Malthouse
Vice Chair
Metropolitan Police Authority

Introduction

The London Independent Custody Visiting Scheme

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 with the police 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 to provide a custody visiting scheme in its area. The scheme has the full support and cooperation of the Commissioner and each borough Commander, but is independent of the police. The MPA holds overall responsibility for the scheme's management and administration.

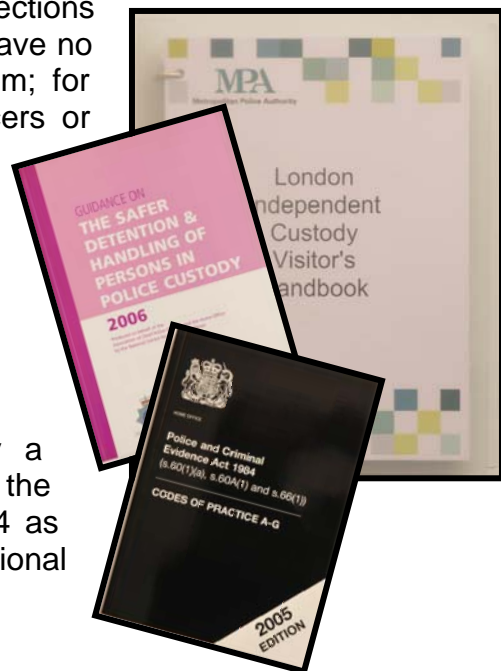
Who are Independent Custody Visitors?

Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) are members of the local community who volunteer to visit police stations unannounced to check on the treatment and welfare of people held in police custody.

They come from a variety of backgrounds and sections of the community. They must be over 18 and have no direct involvement in the criminal justice system; for example, they may not be serving police officers or magistrates.

Other people such as solicitors or probation officers, may also be excluded, to prevent possible conflict of interests for the individual. This maintains the independence of the scheme as a whole.

Independent 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.



The structure of independent custody visiting in London

An independent custody visitors' panel operates within each borough. The scheme is made up of over 400 volunteers across 32 panels.

The panels visit each 24/7 operational custody suite in their borough once a week. Each panel elects a Chair and Vice Chair, who provide leadership for the panel locally and can reflect local needs and concerns.

A co-ordinator, employed by the MPA, supports each panel. The panel liaises with the local custody manager who will attend (or send a representative) to each panel meeting to discuss any queries or problems that have arisen out of the custody visits.

The role of Independent Custody Visitors

Visits are always made in pairs, and are unannounced. The objective of all visits is to monitor and report on the treatment and conditions of individual detainees and to check that their rights and entitlements have been upheld.

During their visit, custody visitors are escorted by a custody sergeant/officer or Designated Detention Officer (DDO) at all times. Every detainee being held (and not in interview at the time of the visit) is offered the opportunity to speak with the custody visitors, but may choose not to. For the visitors' protection interviews are carried out within sight, but out of hearing of, the escorting police officer.



Strict rules of confidentiality apply. Detainees are only identified by their custody numbers, and the details of what visitors see and hear must be treated as confidential. Custody visitors are not concerned with the alleged offence and must maintain their independence and impartiality at all times. They cannot provide advice to any detainee. They do not become involved or take sides, but are there to look, listen and report on conditions in custody at the time of their visit.

Reporting on visits

After every visit, custody visitors fill out a report form outlining the details of the visit. The form contains all the information about the visit, including details of problems that were resolved immediately and those that need further action. Copies of the reports are provided for the police, the MPA and the ICVs' panel for follow up and discussion.

Where concerns cannot be resolved immediately, the police will report back to the next panel meeting on how they were resolved after the custody visitors left the station. Most issues are raised and dealt with locally by each panel, but should any more serious issues arise, or if problems seem to be occurring across London then the MPA may raise these directly with the MPS Custody Directorate - the department responsible for custody suites, policies, practices and procedures relating to those in custody across London.

How to apply

To be eligible to become an Independent Custody Visitor you must:

- Either live, work or study in the relevant London borough;
- Be aged over 18;
- Have no direct involvement in the criminal justice system, for example, serving police officers or special constables; and
- For vetting purposes you must have resided in the UK for the last 3 years.

ICVs are accredited by the MPA and appointed to their local panel.

Appointment as an ICV is subject to successful security vetting clearance by the MPS Vetting Department. All new panel members are paired with more experienced members of the panel until they have successfully completed a six month assessment period. The MPA provides all new ICVs with training to enable them to carry out their role.



2008 Activities

Recruitment

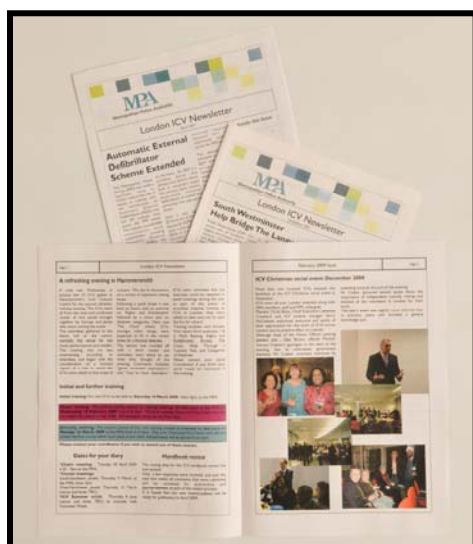
Recruitment remained a core priority for the scheme during much of 2008. In January there were 359 ICVs involved in the scheme, but by December this had increased to 401. The use of adverts in the Metro and Evening Standard proved to be an extremely successful mechanism for recruiting to most boroughs. Where this was less successful (for instance with some outer London boroughs) local media was used. In addition the scheme is listed as a volunteering opportunity with all volunteer bureaux in London and with Do-it.org.

The majority of panels gained the requisite number of ICVs to meet their visiting requirements during 2008. At the end of the year it was necessary to start operating waiting lists for some panels. There are a small number of panels where intensive recruitment is an ongoing need and this is being addressed.

Conferences and events

A conference for London ICVs is held every two years. In April 2008 the 3rd London ICV conference took place at the Park Plaza Riverbank Hotel. Almost 100 ICVs attended to hear a range of speakers talk about improving the custody environment and view a presentation on the use of Tasers from two members of the MPS Territorial Support Group.

ICVs from London attended the national Independent Custody Visitors Association (ICVA) conference in Stratford upon Avon in November 2008. The MPA also held a Christmas social event for ICVs in December.



Information sharing

Panel Chairs and Vice Chairs are invited to meetings with the MPA twice a year. Each meeting has a speaker and topics have included the MPS cleaning contract, Project Herald and custody nurses, diversity awareness and diversion from police stations as a place of safety. As well as listening to the speaker, ICVs have the opportunity to raise issues of concern in relation to custody, to gain updates from the MPA on a range of issues and to hear from their colleagues in other boroughs.

ICV panels are grouped in to four geographical clusters. The Chairs and Vice Chairs of each panel are invited to meet together twice a year in their clusters to discuss issues of mutual concern. These meetings are facilitated by MPA co-ordinators. Speakers have also been arranged for cluster meetings and this has proved popular with ICV Chairs.

Training

Improving and diversifying the training provided to ICVs was identified as a key priority during 2008. The MPA uses the national ICVA training manual and trainers to deliver initial training to ICVs. The initial training session consists of six hours learning, either split over two week day evenings or a Saturday. MPA co-ordinators are involved in the delivery of initial training, ensuring that ICVs have an awareness of the importance of the ICV Handbook and how the London scheme operates.



During 2008 eight modules of refresher training were designed by the MPA co-ordinators to meet the ongoing learning needs identified for ICVs. These modules were designed to be delivered during panel meetings as short, stand alone exercises, but can be used together to deliver a longer refresher training evening.

Training for ICV Chairs, Vice Chairs and prospective Chairs was developed during the summer and autumn of 2008, with the first Chairs training taking place in November.

Diversity training for ICVs was identified as a priority in early 2008. Working with colleagues from the MPS Diversity Learning and Development Branch, a bespoke training for ICV Chairs and Vice Chairs was developed. The first session was delivered in November 2008. This training will be rolled out to all ICVs in London over the next five years.

Self introduction

In October 2008 the MPA started to pilot 'self-introduction' in four boroughs. This followed a request from ICVs in London who were aware of a trial in Hampshire where uptake on visits increased by 35% during a similar trial.

Self introduction involves ICVs introducing themselves to detainees directly and asking the detainee whether or not he/she wishes to speak with them, rather than being introduced by the escorting officer. The pilot will be evaluated at the end of 2009.

Diversity monitoring

In the summer of 2008, ICVs were asked to complete a diversity monitoring questionnaire form. Of the 300 forms sent out, 207 were returned, a response rate of 69%. This enabled the MPA to develop a diversity profile for the London ICV scheme for the first time and to compare that information with the diversity of London.

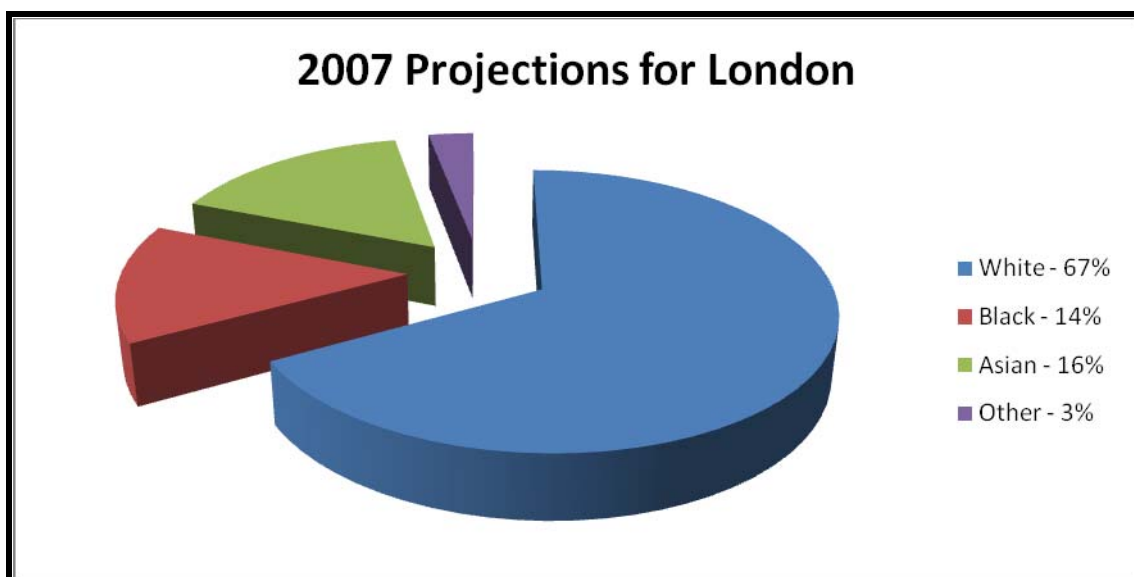
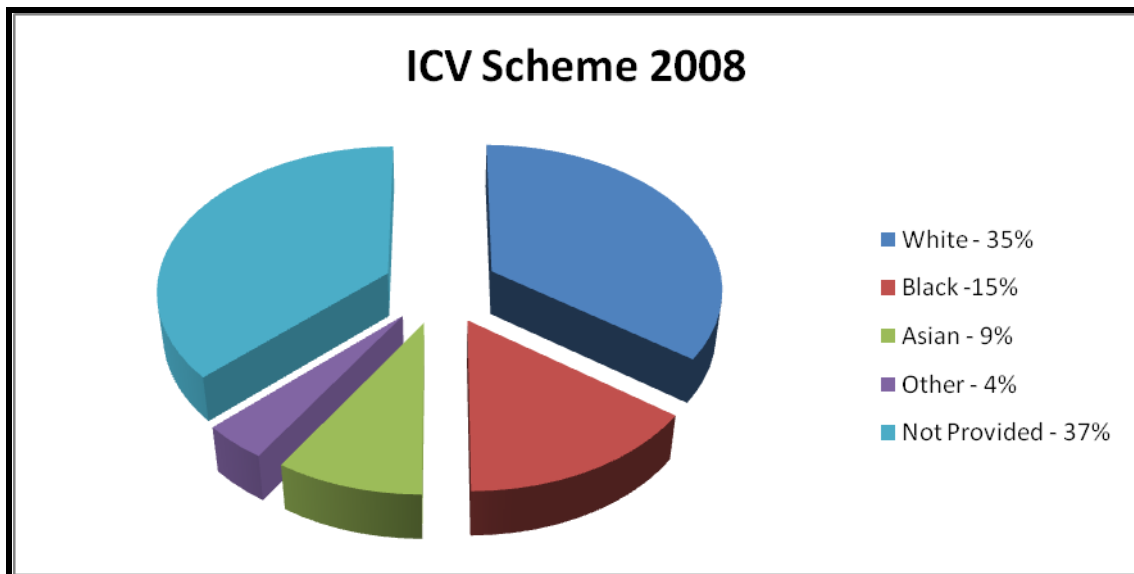
Diversity of ICVs

In order to compare the ICV scheme's diversity with the most recent data for London as a whole official projections* have been used, based on the last full census which was conducted in 2001. The next time a complete census will be undertaken will be in 2011.

The table below show how the London ICV scheme compares to the population projections for London's different communities.

Ethnicity

The total proportion of ICVs from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities in the scheme is greater than that projected for London as a whole.



Age

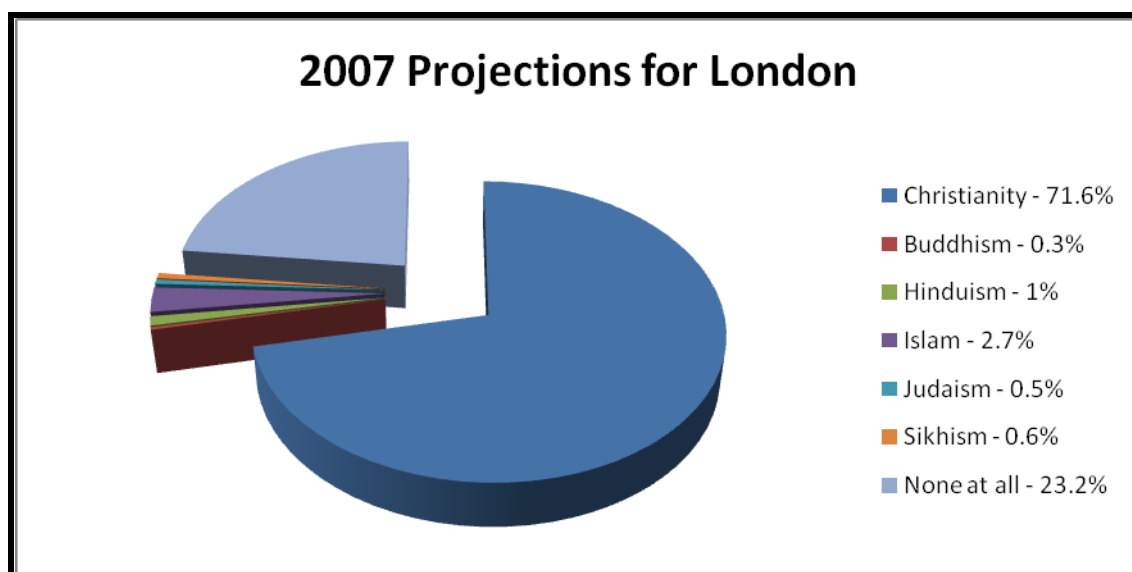
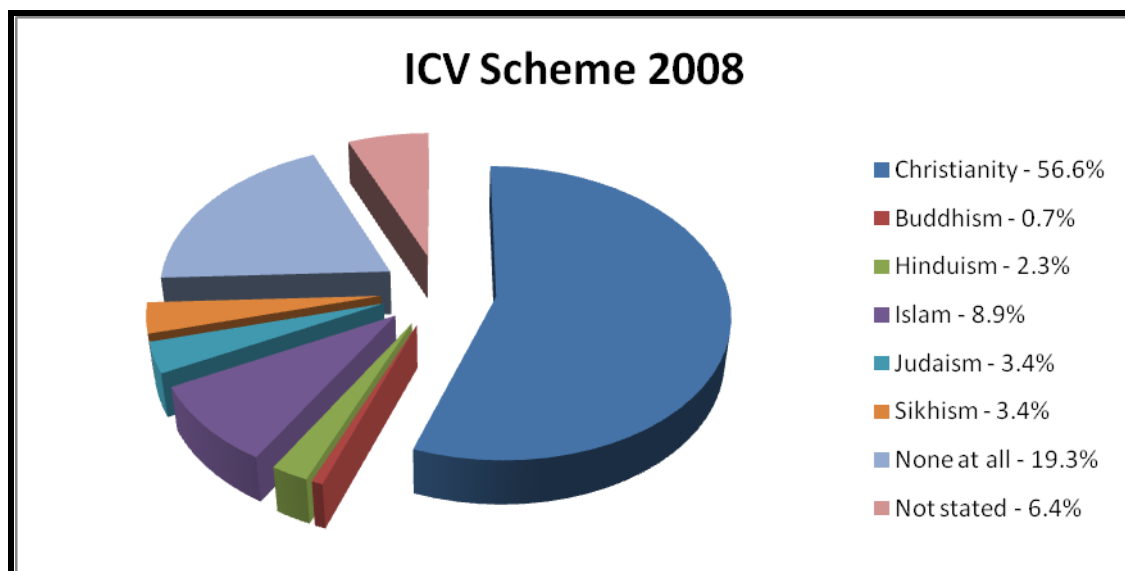
When it comes to age, the ICV scheme has a greater proportion of people between 45 and 65 than London (40% compared to 20%) and more people over 65 (16% compared to 11%). However, the scheme has about the same proportion of younger people as London.

Gender

The proportion of men and women in the scheme almost exactly matches that of the city.

Faith

The proportion of ICVs who said they belonged to a religion or had none at all compares reasonably well with the projected data from the 2001 census:



Sexual orientation

There are no satisfactory figures for the proportion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in the national population but Stonewall (a lesbian, gay and bisexual human rights organisation) have accepted that this may be between 5 and 7%. The data from the ICV scheme suggests that nearly 9% of ICVs are from the LGBT community.

Disability

According to Disability Rights Commission estimates, 18% of the population have a disability. Data collected suggests that this is the case for 12.5% of ICVs.

** Projections derived from the 2001 census calculated by DMAG - the Data Management and Analysis Group - based at the Greater London Authority (GLA). Data from the ICV scheme are across 16 categories of ethnic origin including mixed race; some categories in the scheme data have been merged into "other" to enable a comparison, as data available from population projections are more limited.*

Visits to '24/7' stations

Visit frequency scheme statistics

The table below shows the number of visits that each panel hoped to achieve for 2008, and the actual number of visits achieved, and the percentage that this represents.

Borough	Visits target 2008	Total visits 2008	Percentage of 2008 target achieved
Barking & Dagenham	52	40	77%
Barnet	52	93	179%
Bexley	52	49	94%
Brent	104	63	60.5%
Bromley	52	51	98%
Camden	156	118	76%
Croydon	104	84	81%
Ealing	104	101	97%
Enfield	52	88	169%
Greenwich	52	22	42%
H&F	104	98	94%
Hackney	104	94	90%
Haringey	104	100	96%
Harrow	52	42	81%
Havering & Redbridge	104	95	91%
Hillingdon	156	143	95%
Hounslow	104	76	73%
Islington	52	61	117%
Kensington & Chelsea	104	48	46%
Kingston	52	47	90%
Lambeth	156	81	52%
Lewisham	52	34	65%
Merton	52	42	81%
Newham	116	77	66%
Richmond	52	53	102%
Southwark	144	77	53%
Sutton	52	52	100%
Tower Hamlets	104	81	78%
Waltham Forest	156	37	71%
Wandsworth	104	90	87%
Westminster North	104	96	92%
Westminster South	156	79	76%
Total	2924	2312	79%

Issues and concerns arising from visits

Issues or concerns which arise out of ICV visits are addressed with the police by the ICVs on completion of the visit. Where an immediate response cannot be given, the MPS is asked to provide a response to the next meeting of the ICV panel, which a police representative attends.

Where a significant issue of concern is identified, the panel Chair or MPA co-ordinator will usually seek a response from the police prior to the panel meeting. Clear processes are in place to allow issues to be escalated locally where necessary. ICVs are aware that issues which have not been resolved to the panel's satisfaction locally can be escalated via the MPA to the Custody Directorate. The ICV Scheme Manager has regular scheduled meetings with the Custody Directorate to share information and raise relevant pan-London or borough concerns. Responses from the Custody Directorate are fed back to individual panels and the ICV Newsletter provides a broader mechanism to share with ICVs information from these meetings.

Across the scheme as a whole, no major complaints were raised by detainees during the vast majority of ICV visits. Where issues are raised, the majority were of a relatively minor nature. This is a very positive outcome for the scheme.

Frequently raised issues across the scheme in 2008 include:

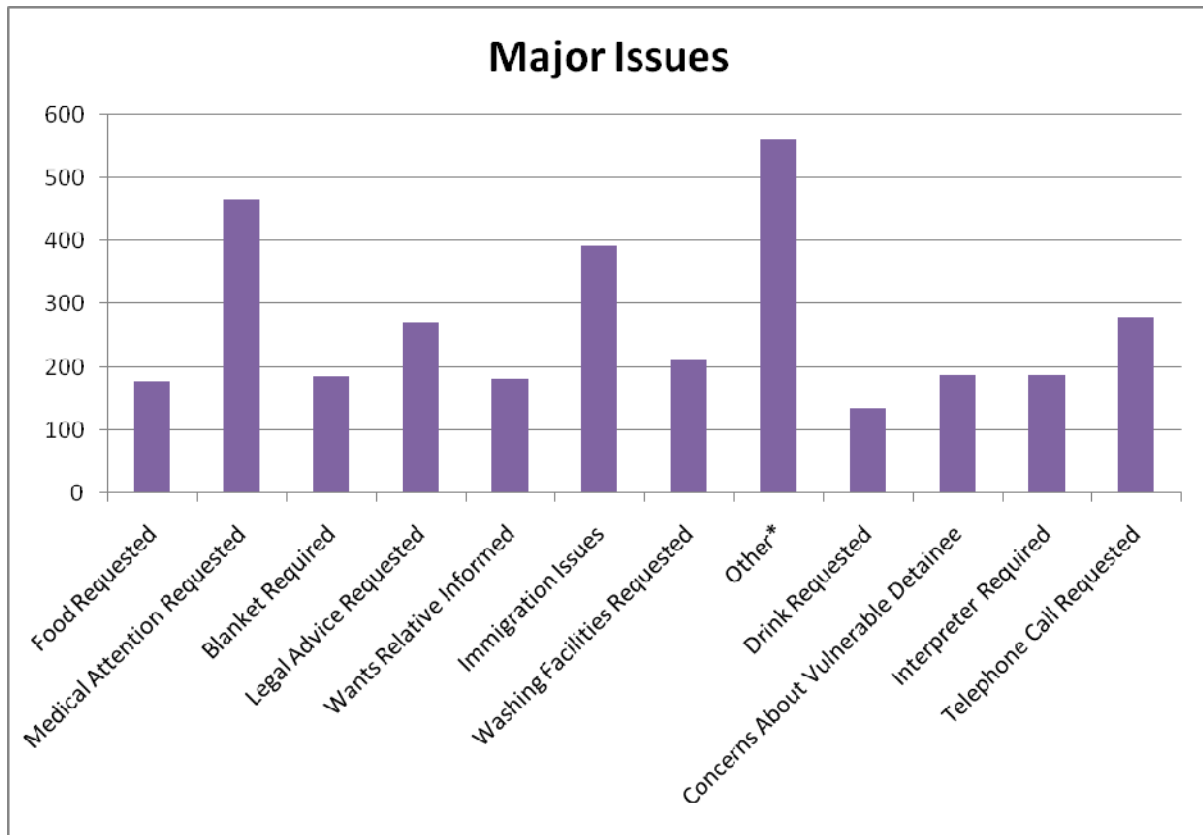
- concerns over delays in arrival of Forensic Medical Examiners (FMEs);
- lack of access to showers/washes for detainees;
- lack of training and awareness of the ICV role for staff on the front desk leading to delayed access;
- concern over people with mental health issues being held in custody;
- concern around the length of time immigration detainees are held; and
- general concerns over the condition/cleanliness of some of the custody suites, including temperature/ventilation.

It is critical that all issues raised are dealt with to the satisfaction of the panel concerned and it is the panel's responsibility to ensure, with support from the MPA co-ordinator, that the response they receive from the police fully addresses their concerns.

ICVs have been instrumental in contributing to changes in custody. For example, concerns raised about the cleaning of cells and provision of blankets has led to MPS Property Services addressing these issues and consequently a new cleaning contract is in place.

The MPA also raised ICVs concerns regarding a lack of shower provision for detainees in police custody. Part of the issue relates to a deficiency in shower and drying facilities for custody staff to enable provision. Cotton towels have now been rolled out across the MPS and it is hoped that this will improve the provision.

The table below shows the issues or concerns that were raised over 100 times from ICV visits during 2008.



* Other refers to a variety of other issues not covered by standard items on the database concerns list, e.g. not visited-violent, prisoner on transfer, about to go to court, no English spoken.

ICV panels

A summary of each panel's annual report is detailed below. For further information about these panels please go to:

www.mpa.gov.uk/partnerships/icv/annual-reports/2008/

Barking & Dagenham

Stations: Barking & Dagenham

Members: 11

Meeting frequency: 6 weekly

The panel completed 77% of their scheduled visits in 2008 and recruited three new members.

The panel is pleased to report that no significant issues were raised during the year. There were a number of minor maintenance issues raised throughout the year such as door handles being broken, floors being slippery and a blocked sink, but these were often rectified quickly. Concerns such as detainees not receiving showers and problems managing the FME room were raised, but improvements have been observed.

In 2009, Barking & Dagenham panel would like to improve the number of visits they carry out as well as raising the profile of the scheme in the borough. The panel would also like to improve links and feedback with the local Community and Police Engagement Group (CPEG).



Barnet

Stations: Colindale & Whetstone

Members: 11

Meeting frequency: Monthly

The panel visited Colindale every week during 2008. The panel also visited Whetstone custody suite which is used to hold Operation Safeguard detainees during specified periods. In 2008 the panel made 12 visits to Whetstone. There were very few custody issues this year despite the custody suite often being very busy. However, the lack of availability of staff and time to provide detainees with showers was raised frequently with the police.

Four new members were recruited during the year.

In 2009 the panel aims to visit Colindale a minimum of once a week and also visit Whetstone station as and when it is in use. They also hope to maintain panel membership at a minimum of nine and to improve links

and feedback between the panel and the local CPEG.

Bexley

Station: Bexleyheath
Members: 5
Meeting frequency: Monthly

Despite its small membership the panel maintained an excellent visiting record throughout 2008.

Generally, the Bexley panel had very few concerns about the treatment of detainees in police custody. Unfortunately there was a death in custody in March 2008. The Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) report has been sent to the coroner and will be made public following the inquest.

Three new members were recruited during the year. The panel also received a number of applications at the end of 2008, following a successful recruitment drive. They hope that this will lead to an increased and more representative membership in 2009. They also hope to improve awareness locally of the ICV scheme.

The Chair attends CPEG meetings and hopes to become more involved in feedback between the panel and the local CPEG.

Brent

Stations: Wembley & Kilburn
Members: 12
Meeting frequency: 6 weekly

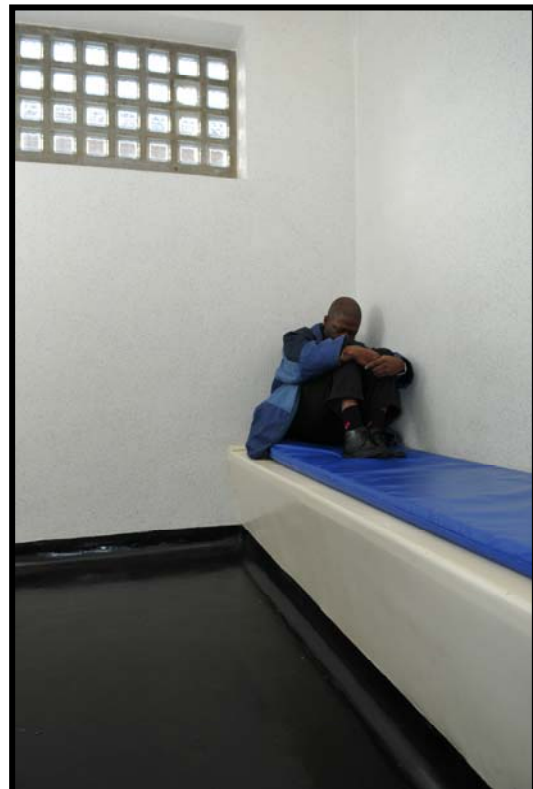
There were few issues over the treatment or conditions of detainees. The panel has expressed concern over the number of detainees they encounter with mental health issues,

the impact this has on the other detainees, and the service custody staff can provide under such circumstances.

The performance in first half of 2008 reflected a rapid decline in panel membership through a mixture of illness and other commitments. A concerted campaign of recruitment and induction of new, enthusiastic members has seen Brent become one of the most improved panels in the second half of the year.

Five new members were recruited during the year but the panel hopes to achieve its optimum number of members by the middle of 2009 and continue its rising level of performance. Brent is also keen to raise awareness of detainees with mental health issues and their impact on the custody system.

An experienced member of the panel occasionally attends the CPEG meetings.



Bromley

Stations: Bromley & Orpington
Members: 10
Meeting frequency: 8 weekly

This panel visits Bromley and Orpington (when in use). Orpington is used for Operation Safeguard detainees. Bromley has an excellent level of performance, completing all but one of their scheduled visits in 2008.

The panel can report that treatment of detainees in Bromley station is very good and standards of cleanliness very high. They would like to see more detainees being offered showers before they are taken to court. When Orpington station has been in use visitors have found a poor level of maintenance and cleanliness.

Three new members were recruited during 2008.

In 2009 the panel hopes to raise awareness of the ICV scheme locally, particularly amongst young people in the borough who are not currently represented on the panel.

The ICV Chair attends the CPEG meetings.

Camden

Stations: Holborn, Kentish Town & Albany Street, Tottenham Court Road, British Transport Police (BTP)
Members: 15
Meeting frequency: 6 weekly

There were no major issues during the year at either the MPS or the BTP sites. However, the panel was concerned about the condition of

Kentish Town custody suite. Most of the matters raised at meetings concerned non-functioning or damaged elements of the infrastructure and equipment at this custody suite.

The FME service was problematic at times. Usually the concern was over the time taken between a call made for an FME to attend and his/her arrival at the custody suite. Initial problems with officers using the National Strategy for Police Information Systems (NSPIS), which included a new computerised system for custody records, generated some concern.

The panel recruited thirteen new members during the year but in 2009 they would like to see recruitment progress for membership to reach its ideal size of 26 members, to improve its visit statistics, and put in place a regular programme of refresher training and talks.

A panel representative sometimes attends CPEG meetings.





The ICV Chair of the panel is also Chair of the CPEG.



Croydon

Stations: Croydon & South Norwood
Members: 12
Meeting frequency: 6 weekly

The Croydon panel's primary concern has been the temperature control at South Norwood police station where cells are often very cold and interview rooms uncomfortably hot. This is a long running issue and although progress has been frustratingly slow, work carried out at the very end of 2008 does seem to have made some improvement. Both stations are generally clean and custody staff usually resolve issues very promptly. The panel has concerns about the length of time immigration detainees are held in police custody, sometimes without access to showers.

Six new members were recruited during 2008. They completed just over 80% of their visits during 2008. This is a good achievement, particularly as the panel trained a significant number of new recruits during the year.

The panel hopes to improve on the number of visits they carry out and this will be in part achieved by the recruitment of new members.

Ealing

Stations: Acton & Southall
Members: 18
Meeting frequency: 6 weekly

The panel completed over 97% of visits during 2008, whilst recruiting sufficient new members to bring them back to optimum strength. Members conducted at least one visit in every hourly timeslot, ensuring a 'snapshot' of conditions in their custody suites at all hours.

The Ealing panel remained concerned at the length of time immigration detainees are kept in police custody, They also noted the growing number of youths being held and the rising numbers of detainees with mental health issues. They were pleased by improvements in the standards of cleanliness in both stations.

Eleven new members were recruited during the year.

The Ealing panel's main objective for 2009 is to continue to maintain their high level of performance and a professional visiting service that helps provide reassurance for all the community in Ealing.

The Chair or a panel representative attends the CPEG meetings.



Enfield

Stations: Edmonton & Enfield
Members: 11
Meeting frequency: 8 weekly

The panel visited Edmonton every week during 2008 and Enfield station whenever it was open for overflow or special operations.

The heating and cooling systems of the Edmonton custody suite have caused some problems this year, but the system is not due for replacement for another two to three years. Some repairs have made slight improvements and the panel is continuing to monitor the situation. Otherwise the treatment of detainees is of a satisfactory standard at both Enfield and Edmonton Stations.

Three new members were recruited during the year.

In 2009 the Enfield panel aims to make one visit per week to Edmonton police station and a weekly visit to Enfield police station when it is in use. The panel also hopes to maintain membership at a minimum of nine. Currently the panel has little contact with their local CPEG but it is hoped

links will be made and developed over the year. They also aim to raise the profile of the panel and scheme across the borough through wider circulation of the annual report and publicity materials.

Greenwich

Station: Plumstead
Members: 8
Meeting frequency: 8 weekly

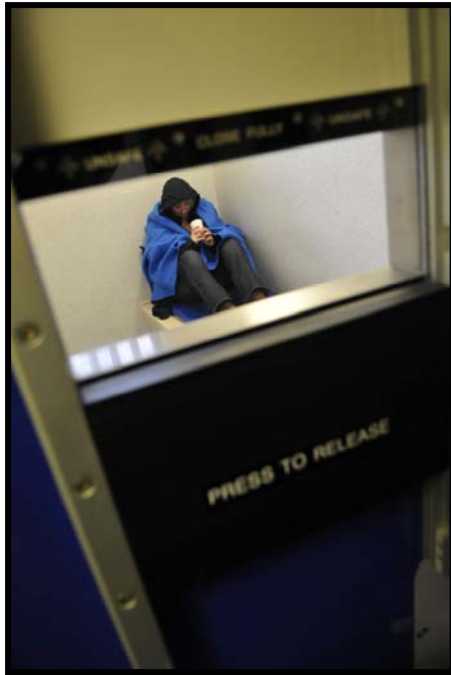
The panel carried out 22 of their scheduled 52 visits, with visits taking place on every day of the week and across the majority of the day. Having insufficient members for the majority of the year had a visible effect on performance.

Very few issues were reported. The noticeable concerns were twofold: poor access to showers and washing facilities for detainees, and detainees not receiving blankets.

Two new members were recruited during the year.

The panel's objectives for 2009 are to increase membership to a sufficient level, to improve visiting performance against targets and promote the scheme in the borough of Greenwich. They would also like to develop links with the local community and CPEG.





Hammersmith & Fulham

Stations: Hammersmith, Fulham & Shepherds Bush
 Members: 15
 Meeting frequency: 8 weekly

The panel has, on at least five occasions, expressed concern over the temperature in both custody suites. Panel members continue to be concerned over detainees' access to showers and washing facilities, especially immigration detainees who may have been in custody for several days.

During the year, the panel made 98 visits against a target of 104; this represents an achievement of 94% of the annual target, an increase of 9% on the results for 2007. .

Ten new members were recruited during the year.

In 2009 the panel aims to make more evening visits, take up opportunities for

training, and build on earlier achievements.

An ICV representative attends the CPEG meeting.

Hackney

Stations: Shoreditch & Stoke Newington
 Members: 15
 Meeting frequency: 6 weekly

The panel is beginning to see real improvements in the way detainees are treated whilst in police detention. However, the concerns are: access to non-urgent medical treatment can take too long, and the lack of interpreters often delays the timely processing of detainees. Additionally, the panel would like to see detainees offered better access to washing facilities and showers, particularly if they are held overnight. Immigration detainees are sometimes held for periods of up to five days in Hackney's police cells, a purpose for which they were not designed.

The panel carried out 94 of its 104 scheduled visits (90%) and spread the visits out well over the seven days of the week.

Eight new members were recruited during the year.

Their objectives for 2009 are to continue building the panel size and put in place a programme of refresher training at panel meetings. The panel will press for improvements in areas of concern such as the housing of immigration detainees in Hackney stations.

Links with the local CPEG are being formed.

Haringey

Stations: Hornsey, Tottenham & Wood Green (overspill)
Members: 14
Meeting frequency: 6 weekly

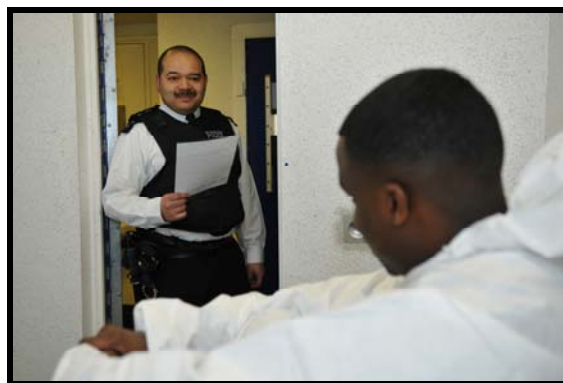
In general, the panel found that detainees were treated satisfactorily within the provisions of the law. Most issues were resolved either with the Custody Sergeant during the visit or with the Custody Manager at the panel meetings. There were some reoccurring issues: the FME service, both attendance times and the FME rooms and cupboards. The FME rooms and medicine cabinets were often found to be unlocked. There was also concern over detainee access to washing facilities and showers. Problems around NSPIS custody recording surfaced from time to time. This was usually to do with required actions either not being done or not being recorded.

The panel completed 100 of it 104 (96%) scheduled visits to the boroughs two 24/7 stations and 23 visits to Wood Green station.

Two new members were recruited during the year.

In 2009 the panel hopes to increase panel membership to a minimum of 17 members. They also hope to put in place a programme of talks and refresher training modules at the panel meeting and continue to ensure that the rights and interests of detainees are upheld.

The Chair or a panel representative attends the CPEG meetings.



Harrow

Station: Harrow
Members: 10
Meeting frequency: 6 weekly

Although never falling below the target of 80% of scheduled visits carried out, the existence of only one custody suite means the occasional missed visit can have a disappointing impact on performance figures. The panel recognised this late in the year and took steps to improve its communication and resilience.

Two concerns were raised on a regular basis: that the FME room was unlocked with used syringes overflowing from the disposal boxes, and the temperature in some cells (particularly in the old wing) was inadequate.

Several members carried out visits on behalf of other panels in 2008.

In 2009 the panel aims to continue to improve its performance and is keen to embrace the ongoing learning opportunities being rolled out to offer a more professional custody visiting service in Harrow.

The panel recently re-established a formal relationship with the CPEG.



Havering & Redbridge

Stations: Romford (Havering), Ilford (Redbridge) & Barkingside (overflow in Redbridge)
 Members: 11
 Meeting frequency: 8 weekly

There have been few major concerns this year. The relationship with the custody staff has continued to be positive and the panel is happy with the way in which custody staff have explained the ICV role to detainees, and answered any queries they might have during visits.

Overall the panel completed over 91% of their visits during the year. Attendance at panel meetings was consistently high and meetings productive.

The panel aim to visit Ilford and Romford Police Stations once per week and Barkingside Station when it is in use.

Two new members were recruited during 2008, and it is hoped more members will be recruited in 2009.

Currently the panel is not represented at either of the borough's two CPEGs and it is hoped links between the panel

and the local groups will be developed during 2009.

Hillingdon

Stations: Uxbridge, West Drayton & Heathrow
 Members: 11
 Meeting frequency: 8 weekly

The panel raised frequent concerns regarding cleanliness and hygiene within custody and noted the positive response to address these issues. Membership fell during the year, leaving the panel considerably short of its optimum level by the end of the year.

The panel completed 95% of visits, more than in the previous year, despite falling membership. Two new members were recruited during 2008. A recruitment campaign was commenced towards the end of the year.

In 2009 the panel hopes to improve and maintain performance and seek to restore membership to the optimum level.

The panel Chair attends CPEG meetings.

Hounslow

Stations: Hounslow & Chiswick
 Members: 13
 Meeting frequency: 8 weekly

No significant issues have been reported. Issues with the supply of blankets, which was a concern last year, have largely been resolved. However, there was a short period at the end of the year during the cold

weather when there was a temporary supply problem.

The panel achieved 74% of their visiting targets. This result is disappointing for the panel following as it does the excellent results for 2007. The shortfall is partly accounted for by changes in the panel membership.

One new member was recruited during 2008.

In 2009 the panel hope to achieve their visiting target for visits and to vary the time of visits in order to maintain or improve upon the pattern achieved during 2008.

The Chair attends the CPEG meetings.

Islington

Stations: Islington & Tolpiddle Street
Members: 16
Meeting frequency: 6 weekly

The majority of re-occurring problems concerned the built infrastructure and equipment, such as graffiti, damage to plaster in cells, faulty plumbing and inefficient air conditioning/heating resulting in poor temperature control in the custody areas and cells.

The panel also had some concerns about detainee rights and entitlements being delayed; reviews seemingly not having been conducted or recorded; the FME service, particularly the delay in examining detainees; and the condition of FME facilities.

Visits during the year were reasonably spread over the working days of the week but there were fewer visits made at weekends.

Three new members were recruited during 2008.

Following the report produced by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons / Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIP / HMIC) on an inspection visit to police custody suites in Islington Command Unit, the panel would like to see improvements based on that reports' findings, with particular regard to the concerns that have also been raised by Islington ICVs. Areas for improvement would include 'holistic' detainee welfare, an increased accuracy of custody records, and addressing concerns raised around detainee's rights and entitlements.

The panel would also like to develop links with the local CPEG in 2009.



Kensington & Chelsea

Stations: Chelsea, Notting Hill & Kensington (overflow)
Members: 10
Meeting frequency: Monthly

Though there continues to be concern over immigration and vulnerable detainees held in police custody, few specific concerns over detainee treatment were noted during the year.

The panel was unable to achieve its visiting target for the year due to low membership, but has carried out as many visits as possible. The panel recruited an additional six members during 2008.

In 2009 the panel hopes to recruit more members and to increase their visiting performance against targets.

The panel has re-established links with the Kensington & Chelsea CPEG and the Chair attends their meetings.



Kingston

Stations: Kingston
Members: 10
Meeting frequency: 8 weekly

The majority of the reports have not raised any significant issues which required a response from the local police.

The panel made 47 visits during 2008 which represents an achievement of 90%.

In 2009 the panel hopes to achieve the target of 52 visits per year and to provide a good spread with days and times of visits being monitored at panel meetings.

A panel representative attends the CPEG meetings.

Lambeth

Stations: Brixton, Kennington & Streatham
Members: 12
Meeting frequency: Monthly

An ongoing concern has been the lack of knowledge and awareness some custody officers have of the ICV scheme. The panel has raised concerns about the access that detainees have to showers and wash facilities. In particular the panel continues to be concerned about the detention facilities at Streatham custody suite which do not have shower facilities. In accordance with a Home Office directive the police must provide detainees with a bowl of water to wash in the cells. However, on 5 occasions in 2008 the panel reported that a wash bowl could not be located. The panel believe that this is unacceptable and will continue to monitor the facilities at Streatham.

In 2008 the panel made a total of 81 visits against the target of 156. This represents an achievement of 52% of the panels visiting target. This is a reflection of the low membership the panel experienced during 2008.

Five new members were recruited during 2008.

In 2009 the panel hopes to work with the MPA on the recruitment of new members to ensure that the membership increases and ideally reflects the community served by the panel; to make one visit a week to each of the three stations in the borough; and vary the days of the week and times of visits to get an accurate picture of the Custody Suite.

The panel has well established links with the CPEG and the Chair attends the meetings.

Lewisham

Stations: Lewisham
Members: 10
Meeting frequency: 8 weekly

The panel had few concerns about the treatment of detainees in custody in Lewisham during 2008. They have however been disappointed with the lack of police engagement with them at times during the year. Though the panel appreciates that the station can be very busy, they would like to see detainees given better access to washing facilities.

The panel completed 63% of their scheduled visits during 2008. This leaves significant room for improvement for 2009.

In 2009 the panel hopes to recruit several new members. This, together with better communication between meetings, will help to improve the panel's visit performance. They also hope to see a significant improvement to the level of police engagement with the panel and improve their links with the CPEG.



Merton

Stations: Wimbledon
Members: 9
Meeting frequency: Quarterly

The Merton panel finished 2008 with eight active members and one member on sabbatical leave. They achieved 81% of their visiting target, making 42 out of 52 visits. Like its neighbouring panel Sutton, Merton also meets quarterly.

There is one custody suite in Merton situated in Wimbledon Police Station. The majority of the panel's reports during 2008 did not raise any significant issues.

However, there were some recurring issues. An ongoing concern was the lack of knowledge and awareness some custody officers have of the ICV scheme. This caused entry to the custody suite to be delayed on two occasions.

The panel also expressed concern about the temperature in the custody suite. The ventilation and heating system has been a panel concern for a number of years.

Two new members were recruited during 2008.

The panel's main aim for 2009 is to promote and raise awareness of the London ICV scheme within Merton.

The CPEG has recently been reformed and ICVs engagement is improving.

Newham

Stations: Forest Gate, Plaistow & West Ham (BTP)
Members: 14
Meeting frequency: Monthly

The panel is pleased to report that no significant issues were raised in 2008. There were a number of minor concerns such as detainees' access to showers and washing facilities as well as cleanliness and maintenance issues. The low temperature of cells was also recorded a number of times as well as concerns over the provision of blankets to detainees.

Newham ICV panel completed 77 of their 116 scheduled visits (66%) with the number of visits improving over the final few months of the year.

Six new members were recruited during 2008.

In 2009 the panel would like to improve the number of visits to reach target figures. To do this they will need to increase membership and are eager to recruit new volunteers. This can be achieved by raising the profile of the

scheme in the borough, another aim the panel wishes to fulfil.

A panel representative attends CPEG meetings.



Richmond

Stations: Richmond & Teddington
Members: 12
Meeting frequency: 8 weekly

In the majority of cases, detainees expressed no concerns about their treatment. A small number of items were raised, which required a police response. These included the access to washing facilities.

The panel achieved 98% of their planned visits to the two main custody suites.

Two new members were recruited during 2008.

In 2009 the panel hopes to make a total of 64 visits, to vary the time of visits in order to provide a better spread and in particular to ensure that a minimum of 10% of visits are carried out between 20:00 and 04:00 and that the number of visits on a Sunday is also increased.

The ICV Chair attends CPEG meetings.

Southwark

Stations: Walworth & Peckham
Members: 17
Meeting frequency: Monthly

In addition to Walworth & Peckham, the panel also made visits to Southwark police station until October 2008 when the custody suite was closed. Southwark is now only used as custody facility for overflow from other stations, for serious public disorder and special operations.

A number of concerns were raised about poor cleanliness and untidiness in some areas within the custody suites. In response the police introduced new procedures to monitor cleaning and the panel will continue to check on this issue throughout 2009. The panel also raised concerns that detainees who have been in custody for longer periods of time are not routinely offered a shower. Detainees do not seem to be aware that they can ask for a shower if they want one.

The panel made a total of 77 visits against the target of 144. This represents an achievement of 53% of the panels visiting target. This is a reflection of the low membership the panel experienced during 2008.

Ten new members were recruited during 2008.

In 2009 the panel hopes to make one visit a week to each custody suite and improve links with the CPEG.



Sutton

Station: Sutton
Members: 9
Meeting frequency: Quarterly

The Sutton panel has achieved 100% of its visiting target for the last 4 years. The panel meets quarterly and has a good 77% attendance record.

There is one custody suite in Sutton, located in Sutton police station. Sutton custody suite is modern and well maintained with 30 cells.

There were only two recurring issues or queries recorded in visit reports in 2008. The panel, on three occasions, reported that entry to the custody suite was delayed. The panel also raised

concerns about the access that detainees have to showers and wash facilities and highlighted this on three occasions.

Two new members were recruited during 2008.

The panel is represented at CPEG meetings.

The panel's main aim for 2009 is to promote and raise awareness of the London ICV scheme within Sutton.



Tower Hamlets

Stations: Bethnal Green & Limehouse
Members: 21
Meeting frequency: Monthly

The panel is pleased to report that no significant issues were raised in 2008. There were a number of minor issues raised throughout the year. These included the poor provision of blankets and their storage as well as poor access to showers and washing facilities. Unsatisfactory cleanliness was reported a number of times but generally the custody suite is well managed and few issues are reported.

The panel completed 81 of their scheduled 104 visits (78%) and recruited two new members.

The panel has two main aims in 2009; to improve visits performance and to increase awareness of the scheme in Tower Hamlets.

A panel representative attends the CPEG meetings.



Waltham Forest

Stations: Chingford & Walthamstow (overflow).
Members: 12
Meeting frequency: 8 weekly

The standard of care at Chingford is often regarded by visitors as high, with very few issues causing concern. This has been noted by ICVs from Waltham Forest and also Enfield, who assisted the panel this year during a period of low membership.

This year the panel managed a visiting level of 71% overall (37 of 52 visits over the year), which is a significant increase on last year's visiting level.

Recruitment was a major part of the panel's work during 2008 with six new members joining the panel.

In 2009 the panel aims to build on last year's visiting level and to carry out visits once a week to Chingford police station, or Walthamstow station if that is in use instead. It is hoped that the panel will maintain its membership at a

minimum of nine. Also the panel would like to develop links between themselves and the local CPEG.

Wandsworth

Stations: Wandsworth & Battersea
Members: 13
Meeting frequency: 6 weekly

ICVs continue to be concerned about the lack of proper washing facilities at Battersea police station. The station does not have a shower and only a washbasin is available.

The panel achieved 86.5% of its visit target; this is an increase of almost 9% over the level achieved during 2007.

In 2009 the panel hopes to make a total of 52 visits to each of the two custody suites in the borough, to further improve upon the time that visits are made in order to provide a better spread. In particular they would like to ensure that there are more visits in the early morning (00:00 to 07:59) and on Sundays. They also hope to improve links with the CPEG.

Westminster North

Stations: Paddington Green,
Charing Cross & Harrow Road
(overflow)
Members: 14
Meeting frequency: Monthly

The panel has concerns over detainees held overnight not being made aware of showering facilities or offered a wash before going to court in the morning.

The panel completed 92% of visits during 2008 which is an excellent result and recruited four new members.

In 2009 the panel hopes to achieve the target of 52 visits per year and continue to monitor the rights and entitlements of vulnerable detainees.

The ICV Chair is fully engaged with the CPEG and attends their meetings.

Westminster South

Stations: Belgravia, Charing Cross &
Ebury Bridge (BTP)
Members: 15
Meeting frequency: Monthly

No significant matters have arisen and conditions in all the stations remain good. However, ICVs have noted that Ebury Bridge station is in need of major refurbishment and representations have been made to the BTP about this matter.

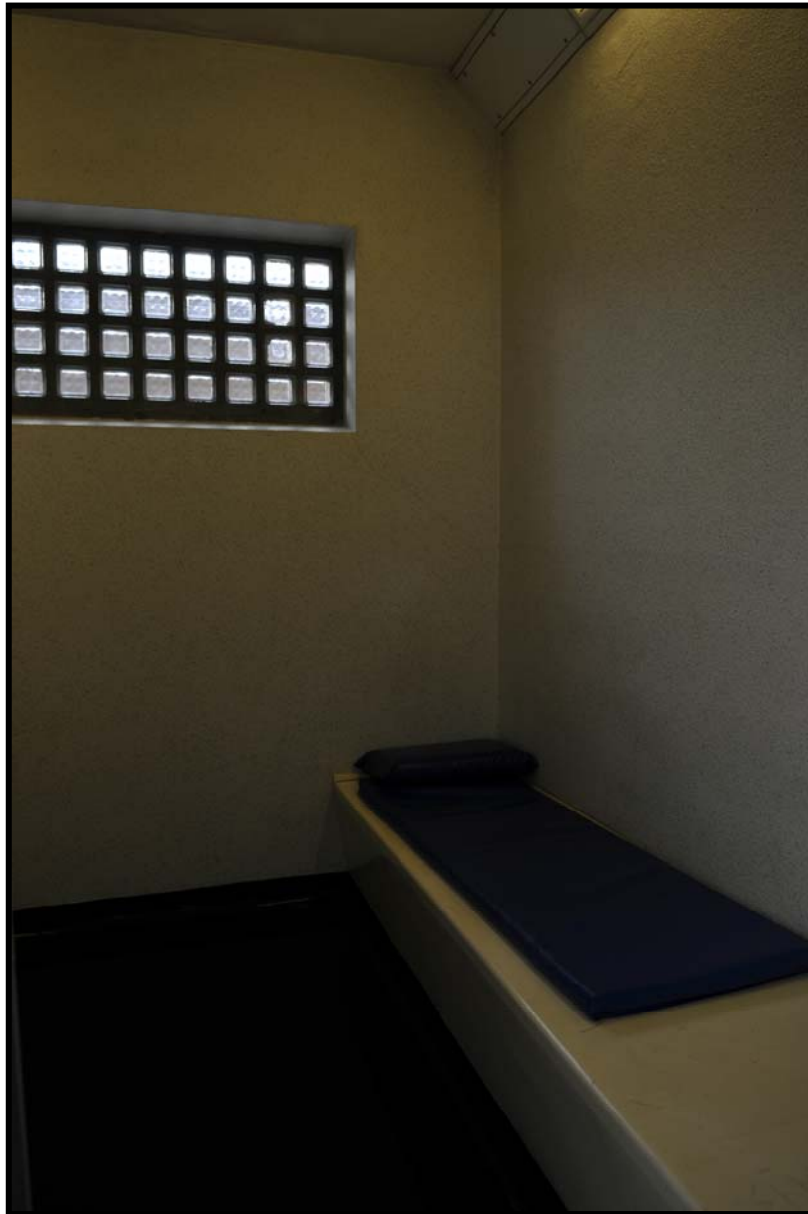
The panel managed a visiting level of 76% overall (79 out of 104 visits over the year), which is an increase on last year's visiting level. One of the objectives of the panel for 2008 was to recruit additional volunteers. The panel met this target and recruited an additional twelve new members.

In 2009, the panel hopes to increase their membership to a minimum of 17 members.

The ICV Chair attends CPEG meetings.

Abbreviations used in the Annual Report:

- BTP British Transport Police
- CPEG Community and Police Engagement Group
- DDO Designated Detention Officer
- FME Forensic Medical Examiner
- HMIC Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
- HMIP Her Majesty's Inspector of Prisons
- ICV Independent Custody Visitor
- ICVA Independent Custody Visiting Association
- ICVP Independent Custody Visiting Panel
- IPPC Independent Police Complaints Commission
- MPA Metropolitan Police Authority
- MPS Metropolitan Police Service
- NSPIS National Strategy for Police Information Systems
- PACE Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984



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