



MPA

Metropolitan Police Authority

Ealing Independent Custody Visiting Panel

Annual Report 2008



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Introduction

Welcome to the annual report of the Ealing Independent Custody Visiting Panel covering the calendar year January to December 2008.

The purpose of the report is to:

- Evaluate the panel's performance
- Provide the local community and the MPA with information about the panels activities and visits made
- 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 ensure that London's police service is accountable for the services it provides 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 Ealing, but is independent of the police. The MPA holds overall responsibility for the scheme's management and administration, providing a team of MPA staff to support the panels.

Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) 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 the ICV 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. The Ealing Custody Visiting Panel forms part of the London ICV Scheme.

Aims, achievements and developments

The aims and objectives of the panel are laid out in the Home Office Codes of Practice, the National Standards governing Independent Custody Visiting and 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. This is achieved by;

- Making a total of 104 visits. One visit per week to both of the borough's 24/7 custody suites, endeavouring to vary the time of visits.
- Maintaining panel membership to ensure an equitable share of the visit workload.
- Ensuring members continue to learn from their experiences and contribute to building confidence between the police and the community in line with the original aims of the scheme.

Over 97% of scheduled visits were completed during 2008 – at testament to the dedication of the Ealing ICVs. In recognition of her commitment to raise performance and help recruit new members the chair received an award from the Ealing Volunteer Service in June.

Visits are reasonably well spread throughout the week but there is a tendency to visit at weekends (42%) especially among those ICVs scheduled to visit Southall station. Once again Ealing is likely to be the only panel in the London ICV scheme to conduct at least one visit in every time slot, thereby providing a 'snapshot' of conditions in Ealing custody suites at all hours. However, half the visits take place in the 16:00h to 20:00h time slot – the majority of them between 5pm and 7.30pm.

Most visits take between 20 and 70 minutes to conduct. This is encouraging as it indicates that even when custody suites are busy – Acton frequently has 10 to 20 detainees – ICVs are embracing the 'snapshot' principle and prioritising which detainees they choose to interview.

Of those in detention at the time of a custody visit over 76% were either spoken to or had visual checks carried out. 91% of detainees were held under PACE and the figure of 5% immigration detainees marks a reduction on last year. 4% of detainees were recorded as 'other'.

Though there continues to be concern over the number of detainees with suspected mental health issues, few specific concerns over detainee treatment were noted.

Ealing ICV panel meetings are usually well attended and most members appear to feel comfortable raising issues or asking questions. The panel has embraced the idea of continuous learning with brief training modules delivered at the panel meetings. The panel welcomed a new custody manager in the autumn and hopes to continue to build on the professional relationship it has worked very hard to cultivate in recent years.

The panel is well represented at training sessions, chairs and cluster meetings and now has a member on the executive of the Ealing Community Police Consultative Group.

Chair's Report

During the past year, the Panel continued to grow and reached its full quota.

Most of the new members were recruited from different backgrounds (see recruitment section for exact details). The new recruits and the original members have, once again, resulted in a very efficient Panel as all the different backgrounds and careers have brought a wealth of experience to the Panel. This positive working relationship has resulted in, during 2008, all members doing their utmost to ensure that very few visits were missed

The positive attitude of Panel members has continued to strengthen the excellent working relationship with the custody sergeants and staff at Acton and Southall police stations. Almost very few incidences of negative treatment by the police have been reported on visits reports during 2008.

During 2008, the Panel said goodbye to Inspector Biln and Chief Inspector Gwillim, and welcomed Inspector Carolyn Davies.

Issues raised during 2008 with regard to detainees were unchanged, ie the length immigration detainees were kept in police custody, a concern at the growing number of youths being held in custody and the rise in mental health detainees.

The issue of cleanliness at Acton and Southall's stations improved in the latter part of 2008 as a result of inspections by Operation Emerald and HMIC and reporting on the part of the custody visitors.

Lastly, the chair would like to thank all Panel members for their fantastic support over the past year as well as our coordinator, James Tate. All members of the Ealing Panel have contributed towards its success as through everyone's efforts, dedication and support to the Panel and, more importantly, the detainees, very few visits were not undertaken in 2008.

Recruitment and membership

At the beginning of 2008 membership of the Ealing panel stood at a little over half the optimum number required to fulfil its visiting responsibilities in line with the guidance on frequency of visits in the London ICV handbook. By summer Ealing began to benefit from the London wide recruitment campaign carried out by the MPA and a series of interview sessions resulted in a much healthier number of members by the end of the year. By slightly surpassing the optimum number of 17 the panel gained some resilience and this is reflected in the excellent performance figures.

As well as having sufficient numbers of members, the MPA expects all panels to adhere to its equal opportunities policy and make every effort to ensure that all sections of the community are represented on the panel.

In June a diversity monitoring exercise was carried out across the scheme which sought to identify which, if any, of the 6 common threads of diversity (age, gender, ethnicity, faith, sexual orientation and disability status) are under-represented. The purpose of this was to ensure the MPA was fulfilling its statutory responsibility in ensuring that no specific communities were denied access to membership of the scheme. As in all public bodies, disclosure of such information is voluntary but a healthy 67% of members provided responses. The results illustrated that although panel diversity doesn't form an exact match to the demographic breakdown of the borough, as identified by census figures and projections, no applicant was denied access to membership of the Ealing panel on the basis of status as documented in their diversity response.

The membership of the panel is healthily diverse in terms of gender, almost matching the borough gender split. The percentage of members who describe themselves as white is slightly higher at 65% than the 55% of the borough population who would describe themselves similarly.¹

¹based on projections derived from the 2001 census calculated by DMAG - the Data Management and Analysis Group - based at the Greater London Authority (GLA). These data comparisons are confined to apparent strands of diversity only.

Members of the Ealing ICV Panel in 2008

Faizal Abubaker

Members who resigned or retired in 2008

Jeannine Andre (Chair)

Jacinta Bray

Kamoru John Atiko

Lesley-Anne Williams

Keiron Coogan

Mike Cox

Christine Dobbie

Teresa Dalmeda-Fisher

Stephen Gennari

Derek Goss

Anastasia Griffith

Dilip Jethwa (Vice Chair)

George Maxwell

Ashley McMahan

Sue Parrott

Narinder Sidhu

Inga Sinigaglia

Joan Towers-Perkins

Sally Wright

Data from panel visits to police stations

Figures have been validated where possible but are subject to anomalies in report forms. Detainees are assumed to be PACE and assumed to be 'seen' where such info is missing.

1. Number of Visits

Station	No. of visits conducted	2007
Acton	50	37
Southall	51	37
Total	101	74

2. Visit times

Time slots	No. of visits conducted	
0000 – 0359 hrs	1	1
0400 – 0759 hrs	10	4
0800 – 1159 hrs	16	16
1200 – 1559 hrs	15	8
1600 – 1959 hrs	50	34
2000 – 2359 hrs	9	11
Total	101	74

3. Visits Days

Days	No. of visits conducted	
Monday	10	2
Tuesday	14	5
Wednesday	6	8
Thursday	13	16
Friday	16	5
Saturday	18	13
Sunday	24	25
Total	101	74

4. Visit duration

	No. of visits conducted	
Less than 30 mins	38	25
30 – 60 mins	49	35
60 – 90 mins	14	14
90-120 mins	0	0
More than 120 mins	0	0
Total	101	74

5. Visit and detainee details

	No.	
Total number of detainees at time of visits	738	507
PACE detainees	675	435
Immigration detainees	34	37
Other	29	35
Detainees seen	564	421
Throughput of detainees in Ealing	11791	11,482

Aims and plans for 2009

As the principle aim of custody visiting alters little over the years – the building and maintaining of confidence between the community and its police service – so the Panel's aims and objectives are likely to change little year on year. The aim persists to continue to provide a professional custody visiting service, maintain performance and illustrate to the people of Ealing that should they, or their family members, find themselves in police custody in Ealing they can be assured that members of their community take an interest in their wellbeing. To those ends the plans for 2009 are as follows:

- To continue to ensure that the rights, entitlements and interests of detainees are upheld and to raise concerns promptly and effectively with local police or the MPA as appropriate.
- To make a total of 104 visits to the Ealing custody suite and any extra visits considered necessary as a result of special circumstances. To visit stations where Ealing detainees may be accommodated should the Ealing suites be closed.
- To vary the time of visits in order to provide a better spread and in particular to ensure that at least one visit is conducted at every time slot listed in the data section. (pp8)
- To continue to work with the local police to develop a better understanding of issues that affect detainees, custody staff and ICVs as well as the wider policing issues that affect the Ealing community
- To ensure that all new recruits receive local and MPA training. To encourage continuous learning through panel discussion, ongoing learning modules and refresher training sessions.
- To increase engagement with other panels, through cluster meetings, the London ICV Conference and shared training and resources if appropriate.
- To attend and report to the Ealing CPCG as a means of informing the community of the panel's work and the conditions affecting those who find themselves in police custody in Ealing.
- Together with the MPA, to continue to promote and raise awareness of the work of Independent Custody Visitors.