



MPA

Metropolitan Police Authority

Harrow Independent Custody Visiting Panel

Annual Report 2008



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Introduction

Welcome to the annual report of the Harrow 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 Harrow, 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 Harrow Custody Visiting Panel forms part of the London ICV Scheme. This new reporting arrangement brings Harrow in line with other parts 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 52 visits. One visit per week to the one custody suite in the borough, 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.

The minimum level of performance set by the Authority is 80% of scheduled visits completed. Although the panel never fell to a level outside that target in 2008, the figure of 81% completed visits is disappointing for a panel with no membership or recruitment issues. The performance was considerably better in the latter part of the year following reminders by the chair that members should contact fellow ICVs as early as possible if they have availability problems. Conversely, a number of Harrow ICVs conducted visits to other police stations in support of a neighbouring panel where membership did present difficulties. It should also be noted that a greater number of actual visits were completed and more detainees seen than the previous year.

Visits were well spread throughout the week, though detainees are still very much more likely to receive a visit in the evening than any other time. 58% of those in detention were either spoken to or visually checked during visits, down from 66% in 2007, and this may or may not be linked to the fact that over half the visits lasted less than 30 minutes. 97% of detainees were held under PACE and the figure of 2% immigration detainees is slightly lower than last year.

Harrow ICV panel meetings are consistently well attended and visit workload shared among members. The panel has embraced the process of ongoing learning through training modules delivered at panel meetings. The relationship with custody staff continues to be excellent and members are kept well informed on custody issues and wider police developments. Lack of communication from Harrow Police and Community Consultative Group (HPCCG) continued to be a concern, though formal membership was re-established in early 2009.

Chair's report

This is my second report as substantive chairman of Harrow Independent Custody Visiting Panel. On the request of the erstwhile chair of the panel in 2006, I produced the chair's report for that year as well. In total, this year's report will be my third attempt to inform the residents of the London Borough of Harrow and the policing community (including Harrow Police and the MPA) about the work and achievements of Harrow ICV Panel. I am only able to do this because of the untiring dedication and teamwork of all Independent Custody Visitors at Harrow ICV Panel. I'm therefore grateful for their support to my leadership of the panel and for their interest in looking after all aspects of custody visiting in Harrow.

The achievements recorded by Harrow ICV Panel in 2008 came about partly also because of the cordial working relationship with Harrow Police. During the year under review, there was a change of Custody Manager from Inspector Richard Moss to Inspector Alison Darke. This change had no impact on the level of cooperation between the panel and Harrow Police. Indeed, the panel observed that both officers truly acknowledged the relevance of the ICV Scheme and its contributions to better police-community relations in Harrow. As such, the custody team at Harrow demonstrated keen awareness of the scheme and this in turn helped in avoiding delays to access the custody; in resolving issues of concern raised during / after visits; and in receiving regular police feedback and attendance at Panel meetings.

As the report itself is very detailed, I would invite readers to pay special attention to the section that deals with Aims, Achievements and Developments. I hope the statistics provided in this section make interesting reading as well to all the readers of this report.

The panel was also pleased to have been of assistance to Brent ICV Panel at a time when that panel was thin on numbers. The feedback from Harrow ICVs who conducted visits at Wembley Police Station detailed an equal willingness on the part of Wembley Police in working together with ICVs to address issues of concern raised during visits. It is therefore my observation that the MPA's stewardship of a unified ICV scheme in London is producing standard practice both from ICVs and custody teams in Harrow and Wembley. It is hoped that this observation is true for other panels and police stations across London.

"Learning From our Experience" has been a regular agenda item at Harrow ICV Panel meetings. The MPA ICV Scheme Coordinator has renamed this as "Lessons Learned". The panel notes with appreciation that this item has become a permanent agenda item in other panels and at cluster meetings. Harrow ICV Panel therefore takes pride in the fact that it was the first (or among the first panels) in London to introduce such an agenda item at its meetings to provide ICVs with the opportunity for regular refresher and ongoing learning at panel meetings by sharing knowledge acquired through visits. Such training has in turn impacted on the high level of service ICVs provide during subsequent visits. The panel therefore thanks the MPA ICV Coordinator for (James Tate) for taking the lead on this.

It is observed that in previous years, two concerns were almost always reported in every visit report: that the FME room was unlocked with used syringes

overflowing from the disposal boxes and that temperature in some cells (particularly in the old wing) was inadequate. It is observed that these concerns were mentioned less or infrequently in visit reports in 2008. The panel observes that a number of factors might account for this: that Harrow Police took our concerns seriously and acted accordingly to address them; and that more ongoing training and sharing from our experiences helped ICVs to look for other areas or issues of concern.

As noted in this report, Harrow ICV Panel did not experience membership or recruitment drive problems 2008. But in that year, the panel lost a total of three members through two resignations and one transfer; and in their place, one more member was recruited. In 2008 therefore, membership recruitment to the panel was not a primary aim for the panel. Instead, the panel set itself the task of reviving its membership at Harrow Police and Community Consultative Group (HPCCG) with the aim of having a bigger forum through which the panel would communicate its activities to the wider Harrow community. I was able to receive confirmation from HPCCG of the panel's membership. Unfortunately in 2008, the panel did not make any presentation to HPCCG but it hoped that HPCCG will be included in the mailing list for this report and that in 2009 at least one ICV would attend every HPCCG meeting to give a presentation.

The panel looks forward to 2009 with increased optimism that its aims and plans will be fully achieved as it has full capacity, a very good working relationship with Harrow Police and has revived its membership of HPCCG.

Signed: **Patrick Matthew Hassan-Morlai, Chair HICVP 2008**

With assistance from Faiz Nazerali, Vice-Chair HICVP 2008.

As a footnote to the Chair's Report the panel would like documented their thanks and appreciation for Patrick's efforts as Panel Chair over the last few years. He has led the panel and conducted the meetings with efficiency, professionalism and good grace. The panel are very happy that he will continue to contribute as a visitor.

Recruitment and membership

A diverse borough, with over 50% of its population from the BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) communities, Harrow is also the most religiously diverse local authority area in the UK, with a 62% chance that two random people are from different religions, according to Office of National Statistics.

During the course of the year 1 new member joined the panel and 3 moved on. Membership of Harrow panel stood at 12 ICVs at the end of 2008, with 2 members on sabbaticals. This still affords the panel a ready made resilience to cover periods of unavailability, the optimum number for a panel to cover 1 custody suite being 9. The panel continued to attract applications via London wide recruitment advertising and applicants are offered the opportunity to be placed on a waiting list. The objective of any profile raising measures should continue to be raising public awareness and confidence rather than attracting applicants.

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 Harrow panel on the basis of their status as documented in their diversity response.

The membership of the panel is healthily diverse in terms of gender, though with 7 male and 6 female members slightly reverses the borough gender split. The percentage of members who describe themselves as white is lower than the 49% 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 Harrow ICV Panel in 2008

Sohail Anwar

Julia Fraser

Michael Fitzgerald

Patrick Hassan-Morlai (Chair)

Brian Lay

Faiz Nazerali (Vice-chair)

Peter Morris

Ashok Parmar

Deepa Popat

Abu Saud

Roger St Paul

Kathy Twomey

Members who resigned, retired or transferred in 2008

Antonia Green

Emma Treanor

June Walker

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 | 2008 visits conducted | 2007 |
|--------------|-----------------------|----------|
| Harrow | | |
| Scheduled | 52 | 39 |
| Total | 42 (81%) | 33 (85%) |

2. Visit times

| Time slots | 2008 visits conducted | 2007 |
|-----------------|-----------------------|------|
| 0000 – 0359 hrs | 0 | 0 |
| 0400 – 0759 hrs | 0 | 0 |
| 0800 – 1159 hrs | 10 | 9 |
| 1200 – 1559 hrs | 2 | 2 |
| 1600 – 1959 hrs | 14 | 11 |
| 2000 – 2359 hrs | 16 | 11 |
| Total | 42 | 33 |

3. Visits Days

| Days | 2008 visits conducted | 2007 |
|--------------|-----------------------|------|
| Monday | 4 | 6 |
| Tuesday | 7 | 7 |
| Wednesday | 9 | 2 |
| Thursday | 7 | 9 |
| Friday | 4 | 1 |
| Saturday | 10 | 5 |
| Sunday | 1 | 3 |
| Total | 42 | 33 |

4. Visit duration

| | 2008 visits conducted | 2007 |
|--------------------|-----------------------|------|
| Less than 30 mins | 22 | 16 |
| 30 – 60 mins | 18 | 16 |
| 60 – 90 mins | 2 | 1 |
| 90-120 mins | 0 | 0 |
| More than 120 mins | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 42 | 33 |

5. Visit and detainee details

| | 2008 No. | 2007 |
|--|-------------|------|
| Total number of detainees at time of visits | 205 | 164 |
| PACE detainees | 199 | 156 |
| Immigration detainees | 5 | 5 |
| Other | 1 | 3 |
| Detainees seen | 118 | 109 |
| Total throughput of detainees in Harrow | 4609 | 4597 |

Aims and plans for 2009

The Panel's aims and objectives 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 52 visits to the Harrow custody suite and any extra visits considered necessary as a result of special circumstances. To visit stations where Harrow detainees may be accommodated should the Harrow suite be closed.
- To attend and report to the Harrow 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 Harrow.
- 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. (pp9)
- 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 Harrow community
- To continue to encourage learning and professionalism through panel discussion and refresher training modules.
- To increase engagement with other panels, through cluster meetings, the London ICV Conference and shared training and resources if appropriate.
- Together with the MPA, to continue to promote and raise awareness of the work of Independent Custody Visitors.