



METROPOLITAN POLICE AUTHORITY

Bromley Independent Custody Visitors Panel

Annual Report
2009

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the annual report of the Bromley Independent Custody Visitors (ICV) Panel.

This report covers the period from 01/01/2009 to 31/12/2009. The purpose of this report is to give a general overview of the panel's work and:

- Provide the local community and the MPA with information about the visits made, including the treatment of those held in custody
- Evaluate the panel's performance over the period
- Present any issues and concerns that have arisen
- Set out the objectives for 2010.

ICVs are volunteers from the local community who visit police stations to check on the treatment and conditions of people held in police custody. The MPA is responsible for recruiting, selecting and appointing all custody visitors and tries to ensure that the panel is as diverse as the community it represents. 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.

The MPA has a legal obligation under the Police Reform Act 2002 to ensure that a custody visiting scheme operates in its area. The scheme has the full support and cooperation of the Commissioner and the Borough Commander for Bromley, but is independent of the police. The MPA holds overall responsibility for the scheme's management and administration and a member of MPA staff is responsible for supporting the panel.

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 borough has one 24/7 operational custody suite at Bromley Police Station, which the panel visits once a week. Orpington station custody suite is used as an overflow and visited when in use.

AIMS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The primary objective of the panel is to make unannounced visits to police stations in the borough to check and report on the treatment of detainees in police cells to ensure their rights and entitlements are being observed.

In the panel's previous report the panel specified their aims for the coming year as being:

- to visit Bromley Police Station once a week
- to visit Orpington Police Station when in use
- to record and compare the diversity of the panel's membership with the local community it represents
- to maintain the panel membership at a minimum of nine volunteers.

As the statistics in this report show, the panel's visiting record is excellent. A total of 52 visits were made to Bromley police station during 2009, which means they achieved 100% of their target. As a panel Bromley also took part in phases one and two of the London Scheme's Self Introduction Pilot. This is where ICVs introduce themselves to a detainee rather than the police officer doing it for them. It has led to an increase of visits up take by around 13% overall, as many feel ICVs explaining their role in their own words is much better than the official introduction given by the police.

Many of the panel's members attended the London ICV Scheme's Summer social and awards evening during Volunteers' Week in June of 2009, where the Chair and Vice Chair were presented with Long Service awards for more than ten years' service each. The panel also received an award for excellent performance over the previous year.

The Chair and Vice-Chair have continued to represent the panel at meetings of the Bromley Community and Police Consultative Committee (CPCC) and also at the London ICV Chairs meetings. They have also assisted with visits in other boroughs where panels have had a shortage of members, and this has been greatly appreciated by the MPA and the other panels.

The Chair has attended meetings of other local community groups and given presentations on the work of ICVs in order to raise the awareness of the scheme more widely.

CHAIR'S REPORT

The past year has been a busy and productive one for the Bromley Independent Custody Visitors Panel. We have carried out our weekly visits to Bromley police station and I am delighted to report that we have achieved a 100% record in this respect. Orpington police station has no longer been used for Operation Safeguard although it remains in a state of readiness should it be required in the future. The Chair and Vice Chair have also undertaken visits to Peckham police station during a period when the Southwark Panel were recruiting and training new Custody Visitors. This has served to broaden our experience of the Custody Visiting Scheme.

During the past year we have observed that the custody suite in Bromley is run to a very high standard and our congratulations go to Inspector Linda Fitzsimons and the custody staff in this respect. I should also like to place on record the thanks of the Panel for the helpful, courteous and professional attitude of all the custody staff during our visits. However, we remain vigilant in ensuring that all detainees are treated fairly and receive their rights in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act.

Our greatest concern regarding the detainees is the lack of washing/showering facilities given to those who are held overnight. Whilst we understand that this is an entitlement and not a right and must be requested by the detainee, nevertheless we would like to find more detainees making use of these facilities.

I congratulate and thank the Panel members for the diligence and enthusiasm with which they carry out their visits, attend Panel meetings and MPA training sessions. The core of the Panel continues to remain stable although two members tendered their resignation during the year due to pressure of work and we have one member currently away sick but determined to return to visiting duties.

Finally, my thanks and appreciation go to Kerry McClelland, James Tate and the team at the MPA. Their help and assistance makes the job of the Chair so much easier to carry out. Although we lost Laura Del Nevo as our Coordinator during the year, we were delighted to welcome back Emma Nuttall on a permanent basis and my thanks go to her for all her assistance, patience and cheerfulness in carrying out her job – even though it involves long journeys for her. I look forward to our continuing good relations with the MPA in the year to come.

Margaret Gubbins
Bromley ICVP Chair 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 2009 the panel had the following members:

Margaret Gubbins (Chair)
Brenda Rayson (Vice-chair)
James Lewis
Margaret Walker
Gillian Johnson
Swarn Riat
Tim Griffin
Lorna Prentice

During the year the following members resigned from the panel:

Russell Bancroft
Gill Robotham

The MPA conducted an optional diversity monitoring exercise during 2008 which has enabled the panel to consider how well it reflects the community it represents. According to data from the London Development Agency just over 11% of the borough of Bromley is of a non-white background. The panel just exceeds this percentage of non-white members in its makeup.

To be eligible to become an Independent Custody Visitor, volunteers must be at least 18. According to London Development Agency statistics approximately 9% of the borough is aged between 18 and 25 and 31% between 26 and 45. Unfortunately the panel does not reflect this breakdown as only one of the panel members is from these age groups. The panel again does not match the areas age make up as 75% of the panel are aged over 65, when only 15% of the borough is of that age group.

On gender the panel does not match local data by over 10%, as it comprises of five women and just three men. Within the borough nearly 52% of the population are women.

The panel is currently one member short of the required number of visitors and so efforts will be made during the year to raise awareness of the scheme amongst the 18-45 age ranges and target recruitment at these groups.

STATION VISIT ISSUES

The borough has one 24/7 operational custody suite (Bromley Police Station). In line with the scheme in the rest of London, this station is visited once a week. The borough also occasionally uses Orpington Police Station as an overflow facility, and when open is visited at least once per month.

Bromley station is a large modern police station with 26 cells and during 2009 8300 detainees passed through the station. The panel has an excellent working relationship with the police representative, Inspector Linda Fitzsimons, and the panel is grateful for her diligent attendance to meetings and prompt responses to the issues they raise. Throughout the year the panel has noted the courteous and helpful attitude of custody staff at Bromley Police Station, and the excellent cleanliness of the facilities there.

The panel is pleased to report that there have been no major issues or concerns relating to police custody at Bromley Police Station. However, while it is understood that it is an entitlement and not a right, and therefore must be requested by the detainee, there is a lack of washing/showering facilities given to those who are held overnight. The panel would like to find more detainees making use of these facilities during 2010, particularly if they are going to court.

On very few occasions during the year detainees have raised allegations of assault or maltreatment on arrest. In such cases the custody visitors have always ensured that the detainee is aware of and understands the procedure to make a complaint. In addition they have checked the details of the allegation with the detainee's custody record (when the detainee gives permission for them to do so) and raised the issue with an Inspector if they have any concerns.

Overall the panel finds the conditions and treatment of detainees in Bromley to be very good and the standard of cleanliness to be very high and hopes to see this standard maintained in 2010.

DATA FROM STATION VISITS

Visit Concerns

When visitors speak to detainees they record any concerns that detainees raise with them.

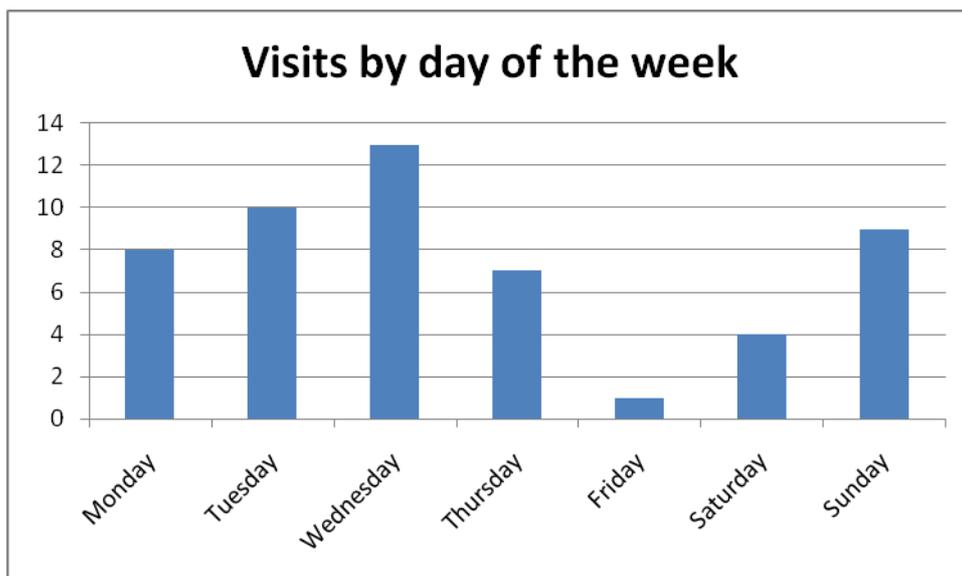
Visitors do not wake detainees if they are asleep, but they will usually check through the wicket in the door that all looks well in the cell. Visitors check concerns raised by detainees against their custody record (where the detainees give permission for them to do so), and will bring matters to the attention of the police if they remain concerned about any aspect of the detainee's treatment or welfare. Most minor concerns can be resolved during the course of the visit and only more major concerns or more complicated issues will be discussed at a meeting of the whole panel.

Over the course of the year there have been very few issues raised by ICVs, and those that have tend to fall into categories such as requests for reading material, drinks or food.

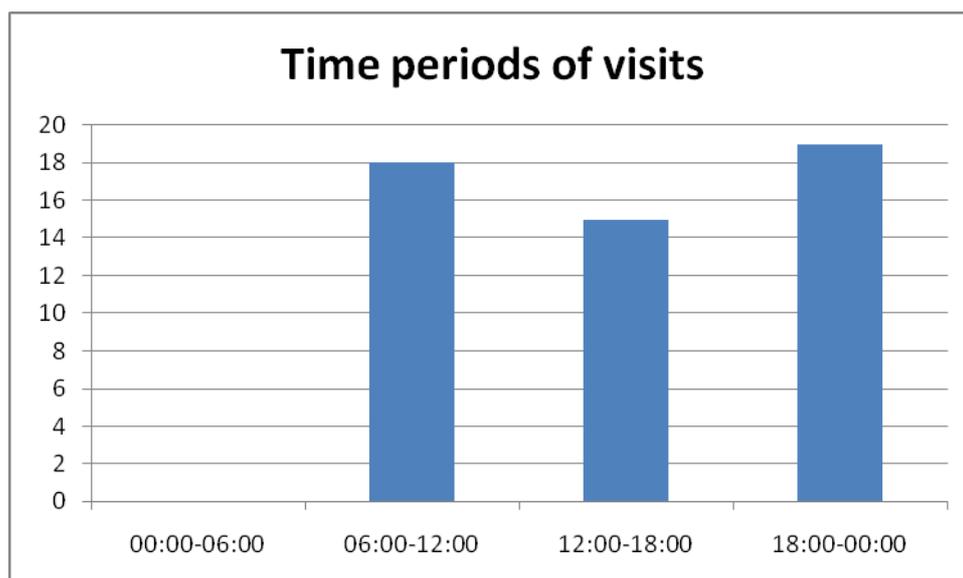
Visits by Day and Time

Independent Custody Visits are unannounced and the panel's intention is to avoid visiting in a predictable pattern.

The chart below displays the number of visits carried out at Bromley in 2009, by time period and day of the week.



Times of visits – by 6 hour period



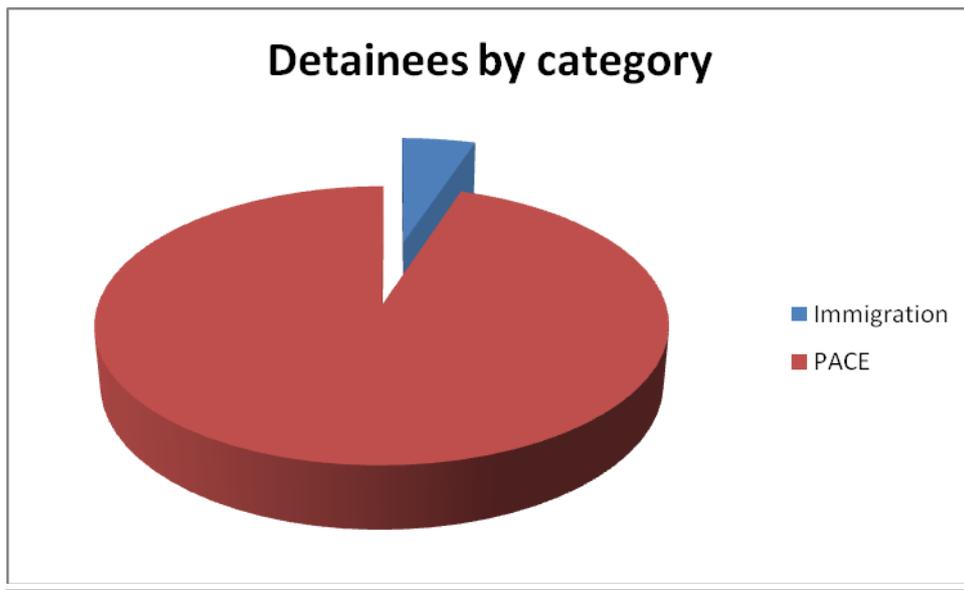
Self introduction Pilot Results

Bromley took part in phases one and two of the London Scheme's Self Introduction Pilot, whereby ICVs introduce themselves to a detainee rather than the police officer doing it for them.

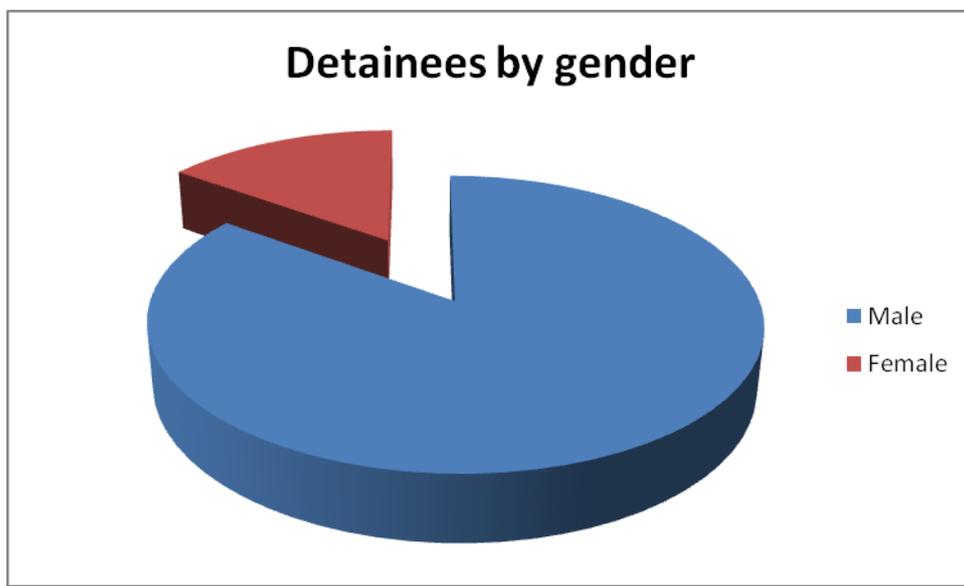
Pilot Phase	Number Detainees Offered Visits	Number Detainees Accepted Visits	% Uptake of Visits
1	93	63	68
2	122	87	71

Prior to the pilot taking place Bromley panel recorded an average uptake of visits by detainees of 58%, therefore the increase after both phases of the pilot was 13%.

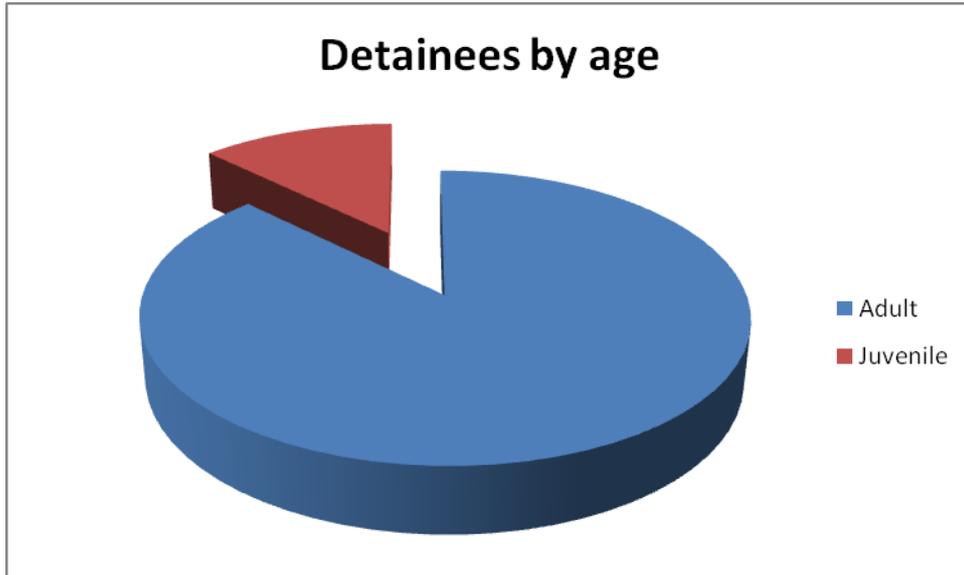
Detainee make up



On the whole detainees held at Bromley station are majority male adults and are held under PACE. Some immigration detainees are seen by ICVs but this is a relatively small number.



The Chart above shows that over 80% of detainees seen are male, and along with the following chart showing that all detainees seen have been predominantly adult.



OBJECTIVES FOR 2010

During 2010 the panel, with the support of their MPA coordinator, will strive to achieve the aims set out below:

- During 2009 the panel completed 100% of their scheduled weekly visits to Bromley police station. They will aim to maintain this excellent record in 2010.
- The panel will aim to ensure that their visits are more evenly spread across every day of the week and undertake a few visits at anti-social times. This will require the coordinator and panel to monitor statistics of visits they have done at several points during the year and the panel to vary the times and days they visits if gaps are identified.
- The Bromley panel will continue to undertake more community engagement work to raise the profile of the scheme locally, including improving links with the local Community Engagement Group.
- In order to address the issues raised in the Recruitment and Membership section of this report any recruitment to the panel in Bromley will be targeted at the male population of the borough aged between 18 and 45.
- The panel will work with the MPA coordinator to ensure that all members can access refresher training, either in panel meetings or centrally at the MPA offices.