

# Camden Independent Custody Visitors Panel

## Annual Report 2010

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# Introduction

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

The report covers a period from January 2010 to December 2010

The purpose of the report is to:

- Evaluate the panel's performance
- Provide the local community and the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) with information about the visits made including the treatment of those held in custody
- Set out issues and concerns that have arisen
- Set out the objectives for 2011

The Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) is an independent statutory body, which exists to make sure that London's police are accountable for the services they provide to people in the capital. The MPA has 23 Members who scrutinise and support the work of the police. The MPA promotes equality and diversity within the police service and is working in partnership to ensure all those who live and work in the capital are treated fairly and with respect.

The MPA has a legal obligation under the Police Reform Act 2002 for a custody visiting scheme to operate in its area. In April 2007 the MPA brought together the custody visiting arrangements managed by the boroughs into one London scheme. The scheme has the full support and cooperation of the Commissioner and the Borough Commander for Camden, but is independent of the police. The MPA holds overall responsibility for the scheme's management and administration; a member of MPA staff is responsible for supporting the panel.

Prospective custody visitors are volunteers from within the community. The MPA is responsible for recruiting, selecting and appointing all custody visitors and tries to ensure a balance of age, gender and ethnicity. Successful applicants to the scheme are given training in all aspects of a custody visitor's role and responsibilities. Custody visiting is governed by a range of legislation and guidance including the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984 as well as Home Office Codes of Practice and National Standards. This year a standardised format has been introduced to facilitate a better understanding of the performance of the panels across London. This new reporting format brings Camden in line with other parts of the London ICV Scheme.

# Aims and achievements

**The aims and objectives of the panel are laid out in the Home Office Codes of Practice and the National Standards governing Independent Custody Visiting as well as the MPA ICV Handbook.**

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

The Camden panel currently schedules one visit per week to each of the 24/7 MPS Police Stations in the borough – Holborn (EO) and Kentish Town (EK) Stations – with custody suites. By arrangement the panel schedules one visit a week to the British Transport Police (BTP) station at Tottenham Court Road. One visit a week per station is the visit frequency required of the panel by the Metropolitan Police Authority. During 2010 the panel managed a visiting level of over 70% for all of the three stations – BTP 67%; EO 65%; and EK 75%.

The membership of the panel at the end of the year stood at 17 although, at some stages during the year, did have more members. There were some resignations and three members had taken sabbaticals by the end of the year. The optimum panel size is 26 members given that the borough has three stations to cover. This shortfall in numbers meant that the panel members did have a higher workload of a visit every three weeks or so. Sudden resignations have meant that there have been some difficulties in completing visits but members have very often been willing to step in to cover.

During the year there were changes to the custody staff because of a reorganisation that has taken place in Camden borough police during the year. By the end of the year a new and permanent Custody Manager, Inspector Carl Pendlebury, was in post. The ICV Chair continued to represent the panel on the newly reconstituted Camden Custody Steering Group. The ICV panel is also represented on the Camden Custody Users Group by a member when it meets.

The panel met 4 times during the year at Camden Town Hall at a meeting frequency of one panel meeting every quarter. The staff at Camden Town Hall have been extremely efficient in providing committee rooms for the meetings and other panel requirements. The staff on duty at the times of the meeting have always been approachable and helpful.

# 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 2010 there were some new applications to join the panel. However, equally there was a problem of retention of ICVs with several leaving after only a short period of service. Also, some experienced members left for personal reasons during the year and others, had to take sabbaticals or take time away due to illness. There was, however a very reliable core of members who have kept the panel steady. It remains the longstanding objective of the panel to have a membership of approximately 26. This was not achieved in 2010 but there was a recruitment drive at the end of the year which, it is hoped, will swell the panel in the early part of 2011. The panel finished the year with 17 members (with 3 away on sabbaticals). During the year five members were recruited, two transferred from other panels and five members resigned.

The panel is healthily diverse in its make-up and although this diversity doesn't form an exact match to the demographic breakdown of the borough as identified by census figures and projections, we can confidently state that no applicants are denied membership of the Camden panel on the basis of any information provided in the diversity monitoring completed on application

The following members were accredited to make visits during 2010.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Appointed during 2010</b>	<b>(Date of last visit)</b>
Suzanne Idehen, Chair		
Jane Atkinson		
Dinah Gallop		
Christel Linden		
Michael Hennessey		
Nina Ariff		
Laura Sarkis		
Joe Aikins		
Lily Silverton		
Alan Ward		
Frances Sealy		
Margaret Haines		
Natalie McGann		
Hester Miles	18/01/2010	
Simon Horvat-Marcovic	26/01/2010	
Joe Oppenheimer	08/07/2010	
David Gates	Transfer to Camden	
<b>Resigned</b>		
Jacob Head		07/03/2010
Emma Stuart-Smith		21/04/2010
Bethan Taylor	Transfer to Camden	20/08/2010
James Clarke	08/07/2010	03/08/2010
Andrew Pereira	10/08/2010	Did not visit

# Chair's report

2010 was a year of new challenges and new working practices for the Camden Independent Custody Visitors panel.

There were changes in the MPS set-up and to personnel in Camden. This included the departure of two very well respected staff members: Sergeant Hudson – leaving custody and Sergeant Ames who is due to retire shortly. However, by the end of the year Inspector Carl Pendlebury was in post as the custody manager. He has already made a good and positive start in his dealings with the panel.

At the British Transport Police there were changes in the custody personnel with DCI Dave King moving away from direct management of custody. By the end of the year Inspector Dan Tanner was in post as the custody manager. He has continued the good work and has been equally prompt and helpful toward the panel.

The Camden panel was one of those who pioneered the self introduction trial which began in 2008. At the end of the year when it finally ended the panel was given the option to continue. The panel agreed that this has proved to be beneficial. It has encouraged detainees to talk to visitors when they were at the station and has played a useful part in the panel's continued efforts to ensure that detainee rights and entitlements are upheld and that their welfare and basic comfort is considered while they are in custody. We have also endeavoured to make sure that less obvious problems are addressed, such as detainees not knowing that they can ask for things such as washing opportunities and items for their comfort and personal care.

In part the panel has had a difficult year and this is reflected in some of the statistics. Some members have had to resign at short notice and some have had to take sabbaticals and periods of leave for illness and personal reasons. Visit cover has not always been possible. However, the willingness of many Camden ICVs to step in at the last moment has been greatly appreciated. A recruitment drive at the end of 2010 delivered a good response so we can, I think, look forward with optimism to the year ahead.

In closing I would like to give my thanks to the entire panel. Their commitment and willingness to give up their time brings reassurance to local people and communities that people detained in Camden police stations are well treated, that their rights are respected, and the care they receive is of the highest standard possible. Of the panel I would like to give particular thanks to my Co-Vice Chairs Joe Aikins and Laura Sarkis who have been willing to give up extra time to serve the panel. I would also like to give special thanks to the ICV Coordinator for the panel, Tony Hawker for all the hard work that he has and still continues to do for the panel, it has really been a great pleasure working with him.

**Suzanne Idehen, Panel Chair.**

# Visits to police stations

During 2010 the numbers of detainees held in Camden facilities were as follows:

- MPS sites 9,851 (Holborn – 5,596; Kentish Town – 4,077; Albany Street – 178)
- BTP Tottenham Court Road – c.a.6,000

## Number of visits

The panel averaged nearly 70% of their planned visits to the two 24/7 MPS custody suites and the BTP Tottenham Court Road suite during 2010. The visits were conducted fairly evenly throughout the day with 27 between 6am and 12 midday; 44 between 12 midday and 6pm and 36 undertaken after 6pm. The earliest visit was made at 5:25 am and the latest at midnight. The majority of visits were made between Monday and Saturday (103) with the highest count on Tuesdays (26). Sunday was the day with the least number (6).

## Detainee concerns

Of the 322 detainees who accepted a visit, 221 raised no concerns with the ICVs about their treatment while detained. Of those who asked the ICVs to intercede on their behalf or made requests the following issues were the most common. Health issues, such as checking if an FME had been called or was on the way; a health problem arising in custody; or discussion about prescribed medication was the single most frequent issue (23). Following this were basic requirements such as requests for food or drink (22), a blanket or extra blanket (15), and washing opportunities (6). Matters relating to rights came next with 20 wanting a relative called or the use of a telephone; concern about legal representation (10); or awaiting a review or information about their detention (9). 11 people requested an interpreter. The overwhelming majority of these concerns were dealt with by the ICVs and resolved to their satisfaction while at the station. Some, including those which could not be dealt with immediately were escalated to the MPA for a response from the police and further discussion via an Interim report or at a panel meeting

## Matters requiring a Police response

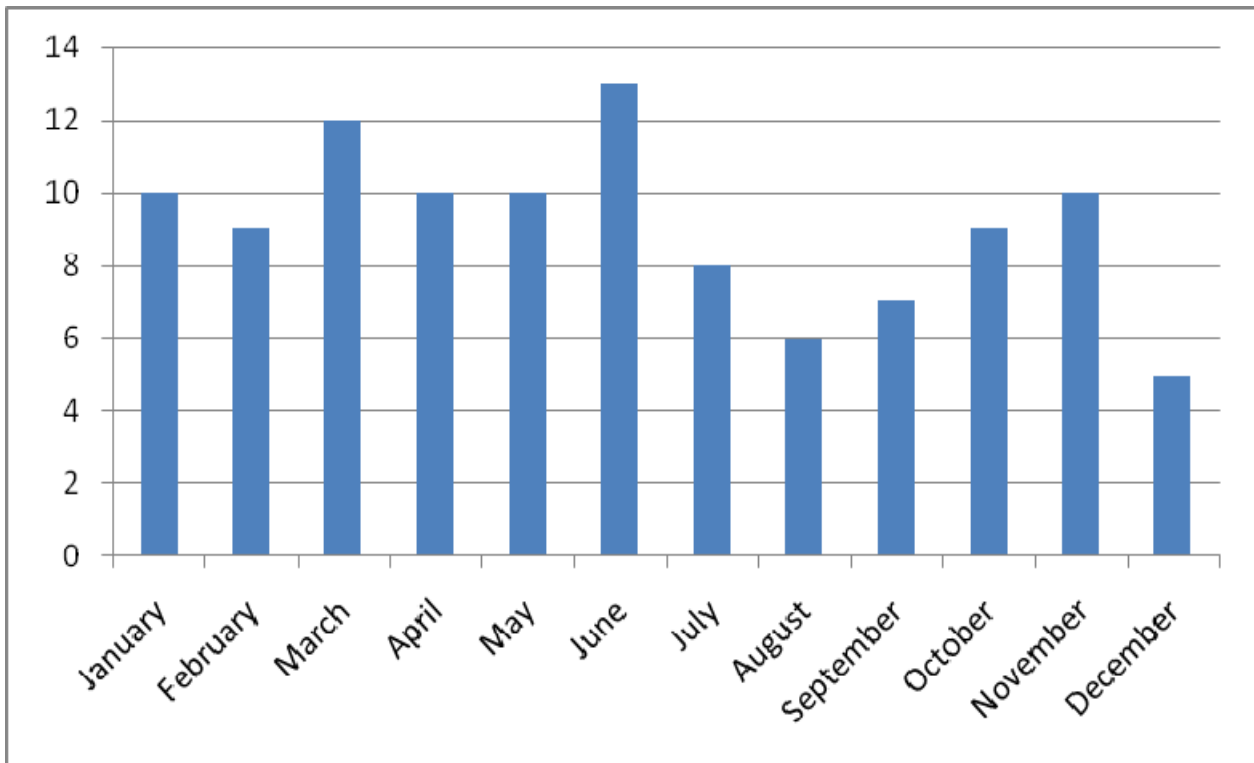
Of the 109 visit report forms completed by the panel 73 had no matters requiring a police response to the panel. Those that did had matters that fell into the following categories. Concerns voiced by ICVs on the built infrastructure and equipment. These included cells out of action for extended periods, toilet flushing mechanisms, buzzers or the entry phones not functioning properly (21). The cleanliness of the suite was mentioned on 3 reports. The FME service: delays in detainees being seen occurred, but more usually the problem concerned the FME room being not maintained properly e.g. doors or cupboards being left unlocked (7). Supplies of commodities such as blankets (removal & delivery), and stocks of ambient foods (8). There were also occasions when the police officers encountered did not know about the ICV role and ICVs were not escorted to the custody suite promptly (5). There were also a couple of occasions when officers did not get a favourable mention in the report (2). However, the frequent mention of officers on the front page of the report was overwhelmingly favourable. The remainder of the matters that required a response were ones that detainees had raised such as: washing opportunities, reviews, and requests for a relative to be informed of their detention.

# Data from panel visits

## 1. Number of Visits (All Stations):

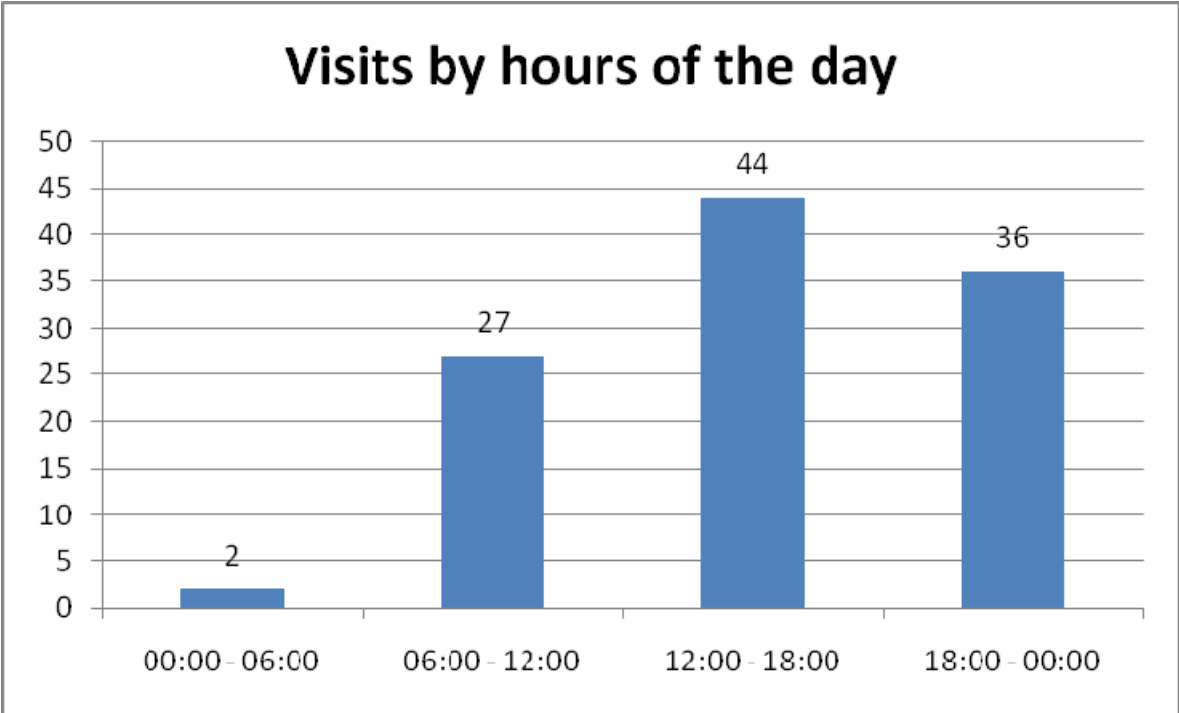
Station	Annual no. of visits	% of annual target
<b>MPS</b>		
Holborn (inc W/E Central x3)	34	65%
Kentish Town	39	75%
Albany Street (Overflow)	1	-
<b>BTP</b>		
Tottenham Court Road	35	67%
<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>70%</b>

## 2. Breakdown by month of visits undertaken in London borough of Camden during 2010:

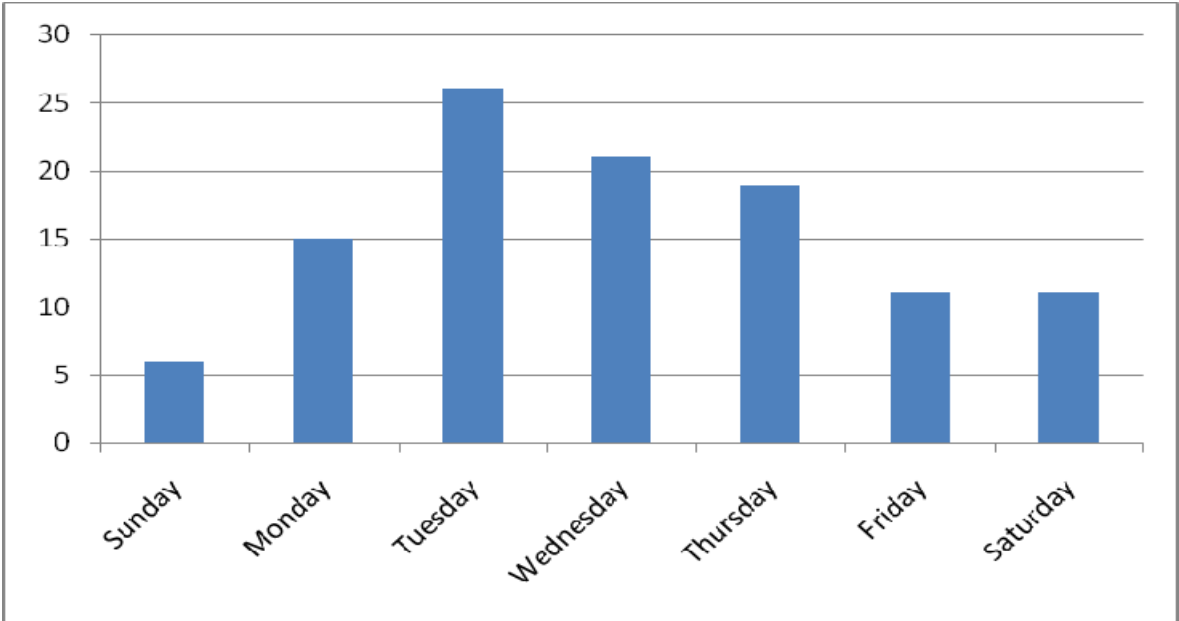




**3. Time of Visits (MPS only)**



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



## 5. Details of Visits - Detainees

### MPS & BTP Stations

<b>Total in custody</b>	<b>Offered a visit</b>	<b>Accepted a visit</b>	<b>Refused a visit</b>
<b>528</b>	407	322	85

	<b>Adult</b>	<b>Juvenile</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Male</b>	423	44	467
<b>Female</b>	57	4	61
<b>Total</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>528</b>

### Detainee by type

<b>PACE</b>	<b>Immigration</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total</b>
506	16	6	<b>528</b>

# Plans for forthcoming year 2011

The Panel's aims and objectives for 2011 are as follows:

- To make a total of 156 visits to the three custody suites in the borough, and make additional visits to overflow sites where necessary.
- To vary the day and time of visits in order to provide a better spread. Firstly, to spread visits evenly over the days of the week with 10% of visits taking place on Saturday and 10% on Sunday. And secondly, to ensure that a minimum of 10% of visits are carried out between 20:00 and 04:00.
- To continue to ensure that the rights and interests of detainees are upheld and to raise concerns promptly and effectively with local police or the MPA as appropriate.
- To ensure that all new recruits receive local and MPA training and that existing members of the panel undertake refresher training at least once during their three year tenure.
- Together with the MPA and independently, to continue to promote and raise awareness of the work of Independent Custody Visitors.
- To attempt, through the application of an equal opportunities recruitment policy, to ensure that the panel reflects the age, gender and ethnic diversity of the Borough of Camden.
- To continue to actively support improvements in custody including improvements to the built infrastructure such a purpose-built custody facility in Camden.