

**Hillingdon
Independent Custody Visitors
Panel**

Annual Report 2009

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Introduction

Welcome to the 21st annual report of the Hillingdon Independent Custody Visiting Panel covering the period from January to December 2009.

The purpose of the report is to:

- Evaluate the panel's performance
- Provide the local community and the MPA with information about the panel's activities and visits made
- Set out issues and concerns that have arisen
- Set out the objectives for 2010

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 Hillingdon, 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 Hillingdon 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 unlikely to change from one year to the next and is achieved by;

- Achieving 100% of scheduled visits per year - one visit per week to both of the borough 24/7 custody suites and the custody suite at Heathrow, 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.

Visits are reasonably well spread throughout weekdays with a slight decrease in weekend visits. There is a reasonable spread in terms of the time-slots of visits although very early morning or late night visits are rare. With improving membership and assistance from the Ealing members the panel conducted more visits last year than in 2008, conducting almost 97% of scheduled visits. A very encouraging 83% of those in detention accepted the invited to a visit and were spoken to. Of the remaining detainees who weren't available, by being out of the cell or refused the visit offer, most were where possible visually checked during visits. 67% of detainees were held under PACE, 5% were immigration and just over 1% 'other'.

In the majority of cases throughout the year there were no significant detainee concerns reported. The very few issues raised were, as reported by the panel, responded to promptly, appropriately and professionally by the custody staff. The number of detainees who accept visits continues to suggest that the verbal introduction of visitors is such that it encourages detainees to engage during a visit. Apart from the detainee concerns other issues raised once again largely related to matters of cleanliness/ hygiene and FME attendance. The panel reports that custody staff continue to take a pro-active approach in flagging up such matters.

The panel has continued to engage, primarily through the chair and vice-chair, in ICV cluster meetings, ICV chairs' meetings and the Hillingdon Community Police Consultative Group which is the main public forum to which the panel reports its activity.

The Hillingdon ICV panel has played a full and active part in ensuring that the rights, entitlements and interests of detainees in Hillingdon are upheld.

Chair's report

This is the 21st Annual Report from the Hillingdon Independent Custody Visitor's Panel and my third as Chair of the Group. The panel undertakes visits to Uxbridge, Heathrow and West Drayton Police Stations. Independent Custody Visitors (ICV) make one visit to each station every week, visiting in pairs and on a rota basis. The panel met bi-monthly during 2009, together with a representative Officer for these stations. At these meetings we discuss the visits made and any concerns raised.

In Hillingdon we are lucky enough to have a team of 19 Visitors, all volunteers, who visit the Custody Suites on differing times of the week and hours of the day. Without exception, they are a hard working and dedicated group of people from all sorts of backgrounds. The Panel in Hillingdon could not continue without their continued support and hard work. So I should like to begin by sending my personal thanks to them all and also singling out John Hayden for special thanks. He is the Vice Chair of the panel and is always willing to assist me in the running of the Panel and advising the members in case of query.

In the past 12 months John Hayden, and or myself, have attended meetings and events held by the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA). I regularly attend the Hillingdon Police Community Consultative (HPCC) Group meetings and joined the Executive Committee of this group this year, joining Ann Bailey who was already serving.

We have recruited well this year with the help of our MPA Team and trained up three new members, with another due to commence visiting. This meant that by the end of the year we were once again in a position to undertake all our rota visits and end the generous and most valuable assistance which our Ealing ICV colleagues have provided and for which we wish to record our sincere thanks. Although the panel is fortunate to have a number of applications for future vacancies I would still welcome any expressions of interest from Hillingdon residents or those who work or study within the geographic area of the Borough to find out more about Custody Visiting.

We have mostly met the aims set for us for 2009. Both in the number of visits made to the Custody Suites within the Borough of Hillingdon (making 152 of the intended 156 visits (97%)) and increasing the Panel's membership level. There is a separate data section to this report and suggest reading if a breakdown of this data is sought by the reader.

Finally I must mention that at the beginning of November the MPA announced an organisational restructure with changes to the ICV Scheme across London. With fewer administrators available to come out to meetings in the Borough's all Panel meetings will now be every 3 months (previously 2 monthly in Hillingdon). These changes will take effect on 1st January 2010 and will be reviewed in April 2011.

We lost Sergeant Claire Ginger, who was our West Drayton link Officer, this year when she transferred to Harrow Borough. We wish her well on this move and thank her for all the work she put into running the West Drayton Custody team during her time there. Sergeant Janice McKeirnan will cover both Uxbridge and West Drayton for the immediate future. However we also welcomed Sergeant Mark Robinson and Dedicated Detention Officer

Mohammed Razak as our links with Heathrow Police Station. We look forward to working with them all. I would like to thank all the MPS Officers and staff whom we come into contact with carrying out the Visits. They are professional and welcoming of our unannounced visits for most of the time and appreciate the work we do.

I look forward to 2010 and continuing to work towards the Panel's aims and objectives for the coming year.

Liam Kenny
Independent Custody Visitor and Panel Chair, Hillingdon

Recruitment and membership

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.

The membership of the panel continues to be healthily diverse in terms of age, gender and ethnicity. In June 2008 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) were under-represented. The purpose of this was to ensure that the MPA was fulfilling its statutory responsibility in ensuring that no specific communities were denied access to membership of the scheme. Last year the results illustrated that although panel diversity did not form an exact match to the demographic breakdown of the borough, as identified by the London Development Agency, no applicant was denied access to membership of the Hillingdon panel on the basis of their diversity response. This remains the case.

In 2009 one member left the panel and four new members joined the panel plus one experienced ICV transferred in from a neighbouring panel. A further new member is also due to commence. The number of panel members now stands at 19. This success meant that in the winter the panel was at last able to resume responsibility for all its visits and cease the assistance generously provide by Ealing ICV's.

However, allowing for a natural turnover of members the panel is still short of the optimum number of 26 members required to fulfil the scheduled number of visits and allow for some resilience. Accordingly recruitment will continue in the new year from a lengthy waiting list compiled as a result of the very successful local recruitment campaign at the start of the year.

The chair and vice-chair continued to represent the panel at meetings of the cluster of west London panels and the panel embraced the ongoing learning modules developed to be delivered at panel meetings.

Members of the Hillingdon ICV Panel 2009

Sabiha Ahmad

Resigned or retired

Christine Alexander

Shirley Townsend

Amrita Atwal

Ann Bailey

Eugene Dalton-Ruarke

Tara Gleeson

John Hayden (Vice-Chair)

Susan Hopkins

Dawinder Kaur

Liam Kenny (Chair)

Yasmeen Khan

Joseph Nduva

David Stockford

Jane Taylor

Joined

Keiron Coogan (transferred)

Jaspreet Nandra

Caroline Lincoln

Lee Teague

2009 Data from panel visits to police stations

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

1. Number of Visits Jan - Dec

Station	visits scheduled	visits conducted	2008
Heathrow	52	52	50
Uxbridge	52	52	48
West Drayton	52	48	45
Total	156	152 (97%)	143 (95%)

2. Visit times Jan - Dec

Time slots	No. of visits conducted
0000 – 0600 hrs	1
0600 – 1200 hrs	33
1200 – 1800 hrs	54
1800 – 0000 hrs	64
Total	152

3. Visits Days Jan - Dec

Days	No. of visits conducted
Monday	22
Tuesday	29
Wednesday	32
Thursday	25
Friday	23
Saturday	10
Sunday	11
Total	152

4. Visit and detainee details June – Dec 09* No.

Total number of detainees at visits inc. Those out of cell or in interview etc	320
Nos. seen	161
Nos. refused	32
PACE detainees	215
Immigration detainees	17
Other	5
Home Office	1
Male	214
Female	24
dult	203
Juvenile	35

- A new database was introduced wef 01.06.09 unfortunately at time of publication not all the information for the preceding period 01.01.09 - 31.05.09 was available

Aims and plans for 2010

The nature of the work of the ICV scheme is such that its main aims and objectives are common to all panels and unlikely to alter from one year to the next. On that basis the panel's aims and objectives for 2010 are as follows:

- To continue to ensure that the rights, entitlements and interests of detainees in Hillingdon are upheld and to raise concerns promptly and effectively with local police or the MPA.
- To achieve 100% of visits to the custody suites at Heathrow, Uxbridge and West Drayton
- 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 Hillingdon community
- To take part in local and London wide recruitment drives with the purpose of increasing membership of the panel and endeavouring to ensure it represents the diversity of the Hillingdon population.
- To ensure that all new recruits receive local and MPA training. To continue to encourage learning through ongoing learning delivered at panel meetings and refresher training sessions.
- To continue to engage with other panels, through cluster meetings, the London ICV Conference and shared training and resources if appropriate.
- To attend and report to the Hillingdon 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 Hillingdon.
- Together with the MPA, to continue to promote and raise awareness of the work of Independent Custody Visitors.