

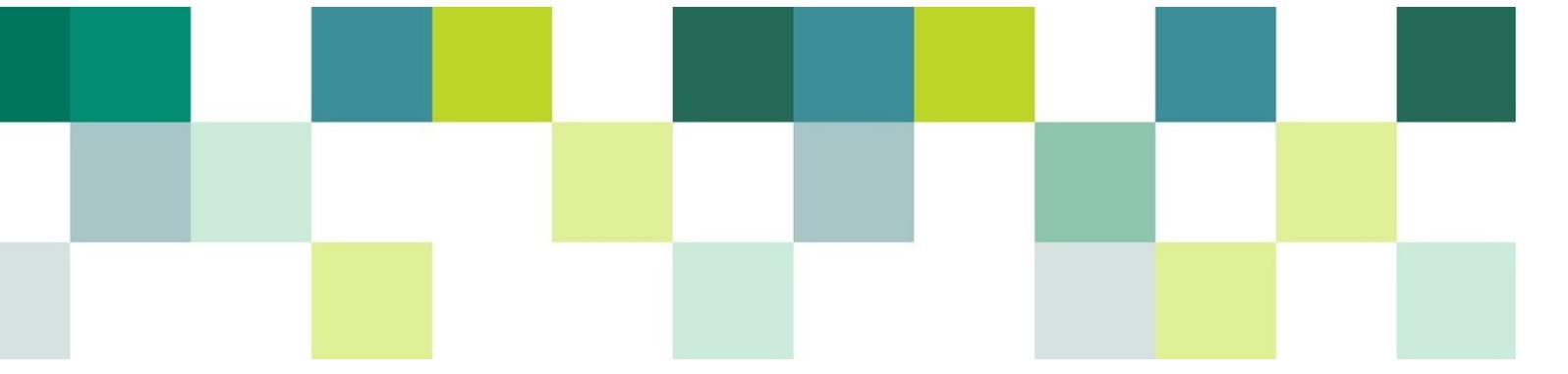


MPA

Metropolitan Police Authority

Kingston upon Thames Independent Custody Visiting panel

Annual Report 2008



Contents page

1. Introduction	3
2. Aims & achievements	4
3. Chairperson's report	5-6
4. Panel membership	7
5. Visits to police stations	8
6. Panel data	9-11
7. Targets and plans for forthcoming year	12

Introduction

Welcome to the annual report of the Kingston upon Thames Independent Custody Visiting Panel.

The report covers a period from January 2008 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 visits made including the treatment of those held in custody
- 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 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 Kingston upon Thames, 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. The Kingston Upon Thames Custody Visiting Panel forms part of the London ICV Scheme and has adopted a new constitution to reflect this. This year's annual report covers the period January 2008 to December 2008. This new reporting arrangement brings Kingston upon Thames 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.

Kingston Upon Thames has only one station with a custody suite that operates 24 hours a day; this is situated in Kingston town centre. It is the practice of the panel to make weekly visits to the custody suite. The panel made 47 visits during 2008; this represents an achievement of 90% of the target; this is 11 percentage points higher than in 2007. Increased numbers of panel members has prevented any serious shortfall like the one that occurred in the middle of 2007.

In the majority of cases, no significant issues have been raised by visit reports. There have been a few concerns that have been promptly resolved by the custody officer during the visit, or by the custody manager at panel meetings.

Visits have been better spread throughout the week with visits taking place on every day. There were eight weekend visits compared to none in 2007; in addition, there were seven visits in the late evening on weekdays. Visits are better spread throughout the day compared with 2007 with more morning visits and with 15% of visits taking place in the later evening.

There has been no further recruitment in 2008; all the new starters undertook their initial training and successfully completed their six month assessment periods.

The panel participated in a self-introduction pilot exercise towards the end of the year. The results of this are currently being compiled.

Chairperson's report

It is pleasing to report that following the success of the previous years, another vibrant & eventful year has gone by giving me the impression of a roller coaster ride. It has been an interesting year when the changes implemented since April 2007 has culminated into positive and consistent practice throughout all the London Boroughs. However, we acknowledge the fact that there is no room for complacency and we in Kingston constantly strive to improve the service we provide by evaluating and reviewing the process both in house as well as in conjunction with the MPA.

The cluster meetings and the meetings with the MPA have continued to be a good source of support and has provided excellent opportunities for networking and training. Our panel is in a very fortunate position because we now have a stable and confident panel of custody visitors whose commitment to the rights and well being of detainees remain resolute. They continue to give their valuable time to improve the plight of the detainees.

We are very pleased to report that most of our aims for last year have been met including the special effort panel members have made to spread the visits throughout the day and surprisingly one visit was even undertaken during the night. This has obviously had a positive impact on our performance and the service we provide. This may/may not be the reason why Kingston was chosen to be one of only four boroughs who were included in the self introduction exercise. Preliminary data has shown that it has been a successful exercise as numbers of detainees accepting visits have increased. We will therefore be continuing with self introduction for the foreseeable future.

There is still a continuing need to raise awareness of the role of Independent Custody Visitors not only among local agencies but also with Police staff and to achieve this goal I have represented the panel at local events and seminars. Open days and conferences, which has often been an eye opener for some people who say they have never heard of ICV's.

The panel has maintained close working relations with Kingston Police. There have been some changes in personnel in the custody suite at the station but this has not caused any upheaval or impacted on the work we undertake. Acting Borough Commander Paul McGregor has been a brilliant source of support in relation to policing matters but also in his positive attitude towards voluntary groups. He has offered an open door policy, which has not only motivated us to support his officers but has given added value to the contribution we as volunteers make to our local community. We would also like to include an acknowledgement of thanks to Sgt Mark Robinson and Insp Matt James the officers who've attended our meetings regularly and have been helpful and co-operative. We are hopeful that our present Custody Manager Gary Taylor and the rest of the custody staff will continue to have a good working relationship with the panel.

This seems to be an opportune moment to extend my thanks to George Fry who has done a sterling job supporting our panel. I'm sure he will agree that he has increased his knowledge about custody visiting and the beautiful borough of Kingston. We look

forward to continuing our good working relationship in the future. As in the previous year the panel would also like to extend our thanks to Sutton ICV Panel for providing cover when Kingston Station was closed temporarily.

Finally it gives me great pleasure to report that I have enjoyed working with my fellow panel members and would like to extend my sincere thanks to them all for their hard work. We would not have achieved our goals without their serious commitment. I hope this will continue and I look forward to the year ahead, its challenges and its outcomes.

Prabha Shetty
Chair, Kingston upon Thames ICV panel

Panel 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.

A diversity monitoring exercise was conducted across the London ICV scheme during the year. There is now data available from 70% of the panel; this can be compared to population projection data* to better understand how the panel reflects the community from which it is drawn. Nearly 80% of Kingston upon Thames residents is white and this is true of 71% of the panel. The next largest population group in the borough is Asian at 12.3% which compares to the panel where this is true of 28.5% of those that completed the monitoring questionnaire. The panel has 40% of its members between 26 and 45 and 50% between 45 and 65. In Kingston upon Thames 36% of people are between 26 and 45 and only 22% between 45 and 65. There are however no panel members in the 18-25 age bracket.

While the population of the borough as a whole is 49% male, the majority of panel members (60%), including the Chair, are female.

An equal opportunities policy is operated as far as recruitment is concerned and applications from all sections of the community are welcomed. It is intended to try to match the diversity of the local community in future recruitment.

The MPA requires visitors to make at least 12 visits a year and it would not be possible to achieve this target and maintain a much larger panel. It is therefore our intention to maintain a pipeline of potential candidates, but to maintain our panel membership at roughly the current level.

*based 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.

Visits to police stations

There is only one custody suite in the borough, in Kingston town centre, that operates full time; the panel makes weekly, unannounced visits there.

The majority of the reports have not raised any significant issues that had to be brought to the attention of the MPA or which required a response from the local police. However, there have been some issues and queries all of which have been resolved:

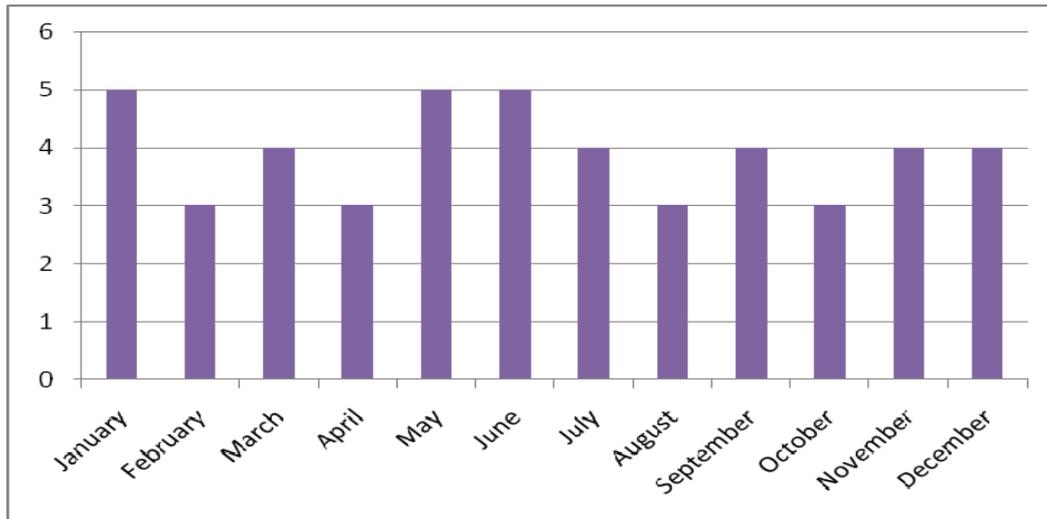
- Questions about cleaning when there is vomit or other items requiring immediate cleaning in the custody suite
- The process concerning persons whose residence may be being searched as part of an enquiry
- Queries about observation times and access to custody records
- Minor problems with gaining access to the custody suite
- Questions about the removal of detainees' shoes and detainees awareness of reviews

Data from panel visits

1. Number of Visits

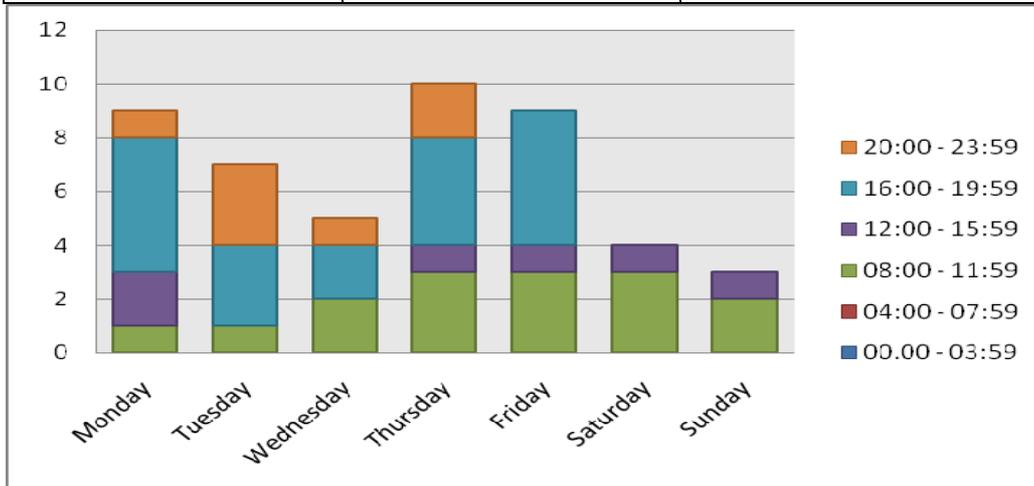
Station	Annual no. of visits	% of Annual Target*
Kingston	47	90

*Annual Target is 52 visits per 24/7-custody suite.



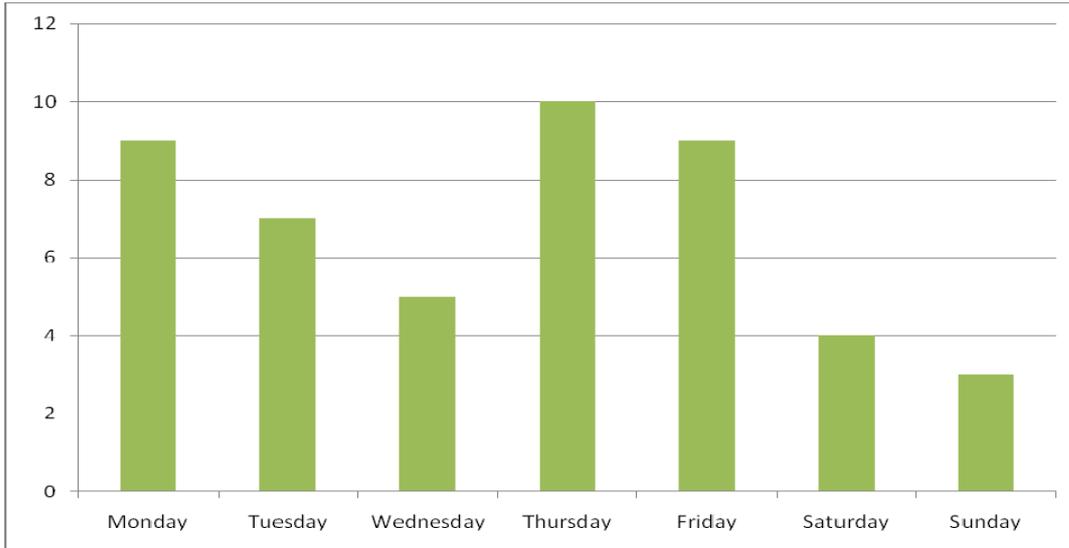
2. Time of Visits

Time Period	Annual no.	% of all visits
0000 – 0359 hrs	0	0
0400 – 0759 hrs	0	0
0800 – 1159 hrs	15	31.9
1200 – 1559 hrs	6	12.8
1600 – 1959 hrs	19	40.4
2000 – 2359 hrs	7	14.9
Total	47	100



3. Days of Visits

Day	Annual no.	% of all visits
Monday	9	19.1
Tuesday	7	14.9
Wednesday	4	10.6
Thursday	10	21.3
Friday	9	19.1
Saturday	4	8.5
Sunday	3	6.4
Total	47	100



4. Details of Visits

Reason Detainee was seen or not	Annual no.	% of all DPs*
Detainees seen	160	3.1
Detainees who refused to be seen	13	0.2
Detainees not seen due to other reasons	33	0.6
Total	206	4.0

*% of all DPs in custody at time of visit (DP = detained person)

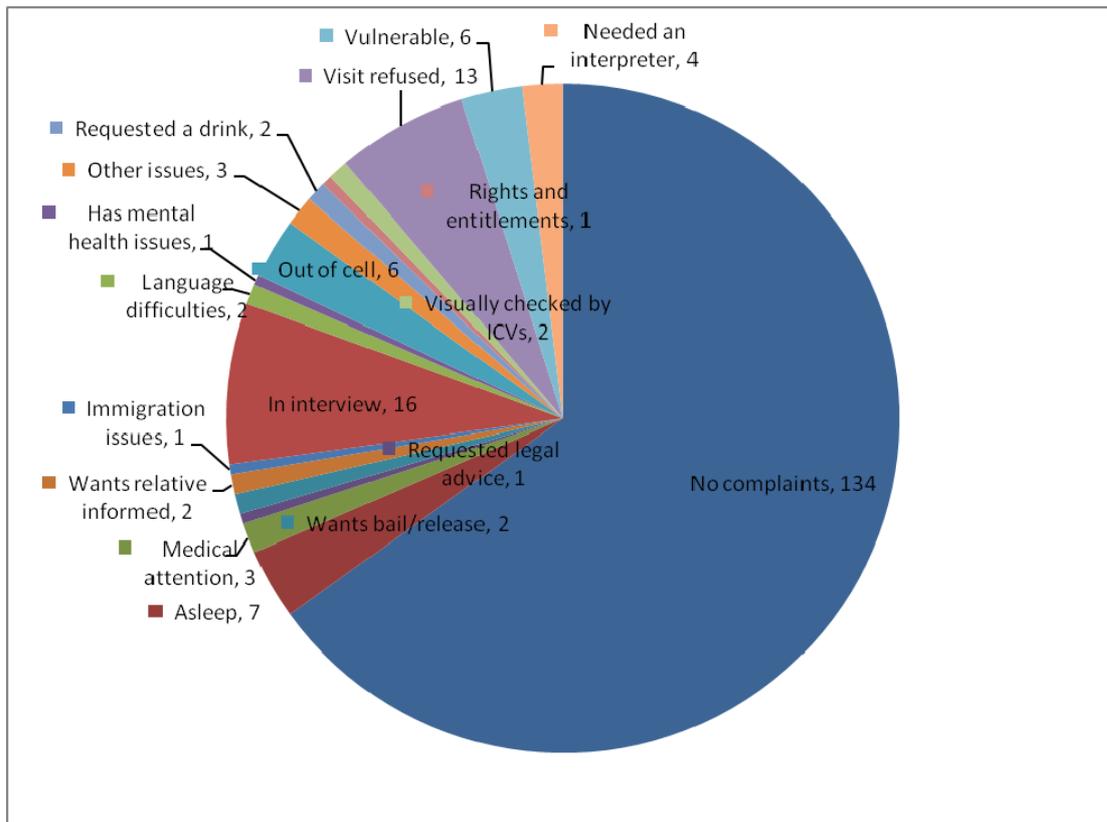
5. Immigration Detainees and Home Office Prisoners

Category of Detainee	Annual no.
Immigration Detainees noted	40
Home Office Prisoners noted	0
Total	40

6. Total number of detainees by type (police figures)

	% of all DPs	
Total number of detainees held in custody during 2008	5102	100
PACE detainees	5062	99
Immigration detainees	40	1
Home Office prisoners (e.g. Operation Safeguard)	0	0

7. Details of detainees concerns:



Plans for forthcoming year 2009

1. Aim to reach target of 52 visits per year. Number and days/times of visits to be discussed at Panel meetings so that additional visits can be added when visits have been missed.
2. Continue to ensure that the time of visits provide a good spread with days and times of visits being monitored at Panel meetings.
3. Ensure Panel members keep training up to date attending refresher training sessions, by regular discussion of training needs at Panel meetings, and by conducting refresher training modules as appropriate.
4. 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.
5. Chair and Vice Chair will attend MPA meetings as appropriate and to feed back issues at Panel meetings.
6. Make sure that a Panel representative attends Kingston Community and Police Partnership meetings, represents the work of the panel to the Partnership, and reports back at Panel meetings.
7. Together with the MPA, continue to promote the London ICV scheme and raise awareness of the work of Independent Custody Visitors.
8. Participate in the further pilot of the self-introduction pilot.