

**Hammersmith & Fulham
Independent Custody Visitors Panel**

**Annual Report
2009**

Contents page

	<i>Page(s)</i>
1. Introduction	3
2. Chairperson's report	4-5
3. Aims & achievements	6-7
4. Visits to police stations	8
5. Panel data	9-12
6. Panel membership	13
7. Targets and plans for forthcoming year	14

Introduction

Welcome to the annual report of the Hammersmith and Fulham Independent Custody Visiting Panel.

The report covers a period from January 2009 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 visits made including the treatment of those held in custody
- 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 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. Since April 2007 the MPA has overseen custody visiting arrangements in Hammersmith and Fulham as part of the London ICV scheme. The scheme has the full support and cooperation of the Commissioner and the Borough Commander for Hammersmith and Fulham, 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.

Prospective custody visitors are volunteers from within the community. The panel and the MPA are responsible for recruiting all custody visitors and try 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.

Chairperson's report

Welcome to the annual report of Hammersmith and Fulham Independent Custody Visitors Panel.

Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) are volunteers from the local community who monitor the situation of people in police custody. They have a general right of unannounced access to custody areas of police stations at anytime of the day or night.

The scheme was introduced in the mid-1980s following a recommendation in Lord Scarman's report into the 1981 Brixton riots. Since then panels have evolved throughout the United Kingdom as an important means of securing accountability of the police to the local communities they serve, bringing police and communities closer together and enhancing public perception of police procedures and practices. It is now mandatory for each Police Authority in the country to have a Custody Visiting Scheme in place.

Visits are always made in pairs and Custody Visitors speak to detainees out of earshot but within sight of the escorting officer. All detainees are offered the opportunity to speak with the Custody Visitors but can choose not to. Before leaving the Custody Area visitors compile a report on their findings which will draw attention to any matters which need addressing. Very minor issues can be dealt with there and then simply by speaking with Custody Staff. The Panel holds regular meetings with the Custody Inspector. This is an opportunity for him to respond to any queries Visitors may raise in connection with their visits to stations.

This report of the Hammersmith & Fulham Independent Custody Visiting Panel covers the period January to December 2009. As in the previous year, this has been a positive and rewarding period for the Panel. For much of the year we had a full membership of 17 visitors and have been largely able to fulfil our commitment of weekly visits to both Hammersmith and Fulham (and Shepherds Bush when open) police stations. In addition, we are now undertaking monthly visits to the British Transport Police Station in Hammersmith. We have varied the times and days of visits more this year and have succeeded in creating a much better spread. I thank all my colleagues who have undertaken visits at times not particularly convenient to themselves in order to facilitate this.

During the course of the year George Fry, MPA Co-ordinator, left us for pastures new. I thank him for his hard work and sense of humour! We welcome his replacement Jennifer Ankrah.

In addition to our panel meetings many members have attended London-wide events and undertaken training. One member attended the national ICVA (Independent Custody Visiting Association) conference in Leicester in November. At the summer social hosted by the MPA one member was honoured with a long service award - my thanks to her for her dedication and commitment. The panel is represented on the Hammersmith & Fulham Community Safety Board where we have given presentations of our work.

Regretfully, the year has ended on a negative note as we learn of cuts to the ICV scheme budget. Administrative support has been significantly reduced impacting not

least on the frequency of meetings and training. This will place additional work on volunteers, particularly in relation to training and supporting new members.

My thanks go to all panel members for their hard work and commitment to the scheme. Thank you to those of you who have left us – we miss you. Welcome to new members. Thank you to Elaine Chumney, Vice Chair, for your support. My thanks to Custody Manager Inspector Peter Capewell who works with us to ensure any matters of concern are investigated quickly and effectively.

Finally, custody visitors carry out an unglamorous but highly valuable and crucial role on behalf of all Londoners. I hope that in 2010 we can further promote our work, thus strengthening public confidence in procedures at police stations.

Carol Bailey

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 is to make unannounced visits to police stations in the borough, check and report on the treatment of detainees in custody and to ensure that their rights and entitlements are being observed.

This is achieved by:

- Making one visit per week to the operational custody suites
- Holding panel meetings and
- Increasing public awareness of the London ICV scheme

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 previous annual report the following specific aims and objectives were set out for 2009:

- *To make a total of 52 visits to each of the custody suites at Hammersmith and Fulham*
- *To vary the time of visits in order to provide a better spread and in particular to ensure that visits occur more often between 20:00 and 08:00 and at weekends*
- *To maintain and improve upon the level of communication with Hammersmith and Fulham police, the custody manager during panel meetings and with custody staff during visits*
- *To continue to ensure that the rights and interests of detainees are upheld and to raise concerns promptly and effectively with the 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*
- *To increase engagement with other panels, through cluster meetings, shared training and providing resources if appropriate*
- *Together with the MPA, to continue to promote and raise awareness of the work of Independent Custody Visitors locally*
- *To attempt, through the application of an equal opportunities recruitment policy, to ensure that the panel continues to reflect the diversity of the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham*

Visits

During the year, the panel made 98 visits against a target of 104; this represents an achievement of 94% of the annual target. The panel also made six visits to the British Transport Police station on Fulham Palace Road.

A better spread of visits was achieved through the year in 2009 when compared with 2008; with an increased number of visits on a Saturday. The time that visits were conducted also improved, especially at “unsocial” times with one visit carried out between 00:00-03:59.

Detainee issues

The Panel raised a number of issues on their ICV reports (see page 7), but there were no very significant issues. Those recurring problems that the police have been asked to address, however, include offering showers to detainees that have been in detention for a few days, keeping cupboards in the FME (Forensic Medical Examiner) room locked, the storage of blankets and facilitating detainees entitlements and basic needs. A local custody inspection carried out by the MPS Emerald Custody on July 16th identified three minor issues including the quality/taste of the drinking water raised by ICVs; these findings are being addressed.

Panel meetings

During the year the Panel maintained ongoing dialogue with the Police, with attendance by police representatives at panel meetings, to provide responses to queries raised from visits and updates on custody matters; this was again a stated aim for the year in the last annual report. Hammersmith and Fulham police now provide a written report for each panel meeting which is circulated in advance for panel members to consider; this not only allows for a more effective meeting, but it allows improved scrutiny of police responses.

Recruitment and publicity

The panel reached its full complement of 17 members at the beginning of the year, however, three members unfortunately left the panel during the course of 2009. The panel continue to use every opportunity to raise public awareness of custody visiting. This includes the Chair’s attendance at Community Safety Board meetings.

Meetings and events

There have been occasions in the year to increase engagement with other panels; The Chair attended several cluster meetings; one in March where a presentation on the new FME (Forensic Medical Examiner) contract was given by Superintendent Dave Imroth of the MPS Custody Directorate. A second session was held in July, where a presentation was given by Inspector Chris Pullen on Virtual Courts.

In June a summer social and awards evening was held for Independent Custody Visitors; a member of the panel was awarded with a long service award.

A member of the panel attended a diversity training course held at the MPA and another member attended the national ICVA (Independent Custody Visiting Association) conference in Leicester in November; the theme of the conference was ‘The safety and dignity of those in police detention’.

Visits to police stations

There are three custody suites in the borough owned by the Metropolitan Police Service; Hammersmith, Fulham and Shepherds Bush. Shepherds Bush does not operate full time however being used for overflow purposes, when either of the main stations are shut, or occasionally under Operation Safeguard. Four visits have been made to Shepherds Bush police station this year.

The panel makes weekly, unannounced visits to Hammersmith and Fulham police stations.

The majority of our 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:

- Concerns over the storage of blankets have been raised; ICVs noticed that dirty blankets have, on several occasions, been inappropriately stored.
- Some improvement to the general quality of the cleaning of custody suites has been observed, but is still variable. Cleaning standards continue to be monitored in order to maintain standards
- The panel have, on occasions, expressed concern over the taste of the drinking water at Hammersmith. This was highlighted in a local inspection report and is expected to be addressed.
- Panel members continue to be concerned over detainees' access to showers and washing facilities, especially immigration detainees who may have been in custody for several days.
- An ongoing concern has been whether the cupboards in the Forensic Medical Examiner's (FME's) room which may contain drugs are kept locked. Panel members have found this not to be the case on numerous occasions. The introduction of drug safes and the improvements to notices has only gone some way to alleviating the number of concerns raised.
- Implementation of detainees entitlements and basic practical needs, especially in the case of foreign detainees, has also been raised on occasions

Panel data

MPS (Metropolitan Police Service)

The data below shows information on visits undertaken during 2009

1. Number of Visits

Station	Annual no. of visits	% of Annual Target*
Hammersmith	50	96%
Fulham*	48	92%
Total	98	Average: 94%

*Fulham closed for four weeks in June, Shepherds Bush visited instead

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

2. Visits per month:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
10	8	9	8	9	9	8	8	9	7	6	9

3. Time of Visits

Time Period	Annual no.
0000 – 0359 hrs	1
0400 – 0759 hrs	1
0800 – 1159 hrs	36
1200 – 1559 hrs	22
1600 – 1959 hrs	29
2000 – 2359 hrs	9
Total	98

4. Days of Visits

Day	Annual no.
Monday	16
Tuesday	10
Wednesday	19
Thursday	18
Friday	11
Saturday	20
Sunday	4
Total	98

5. Details of Visits

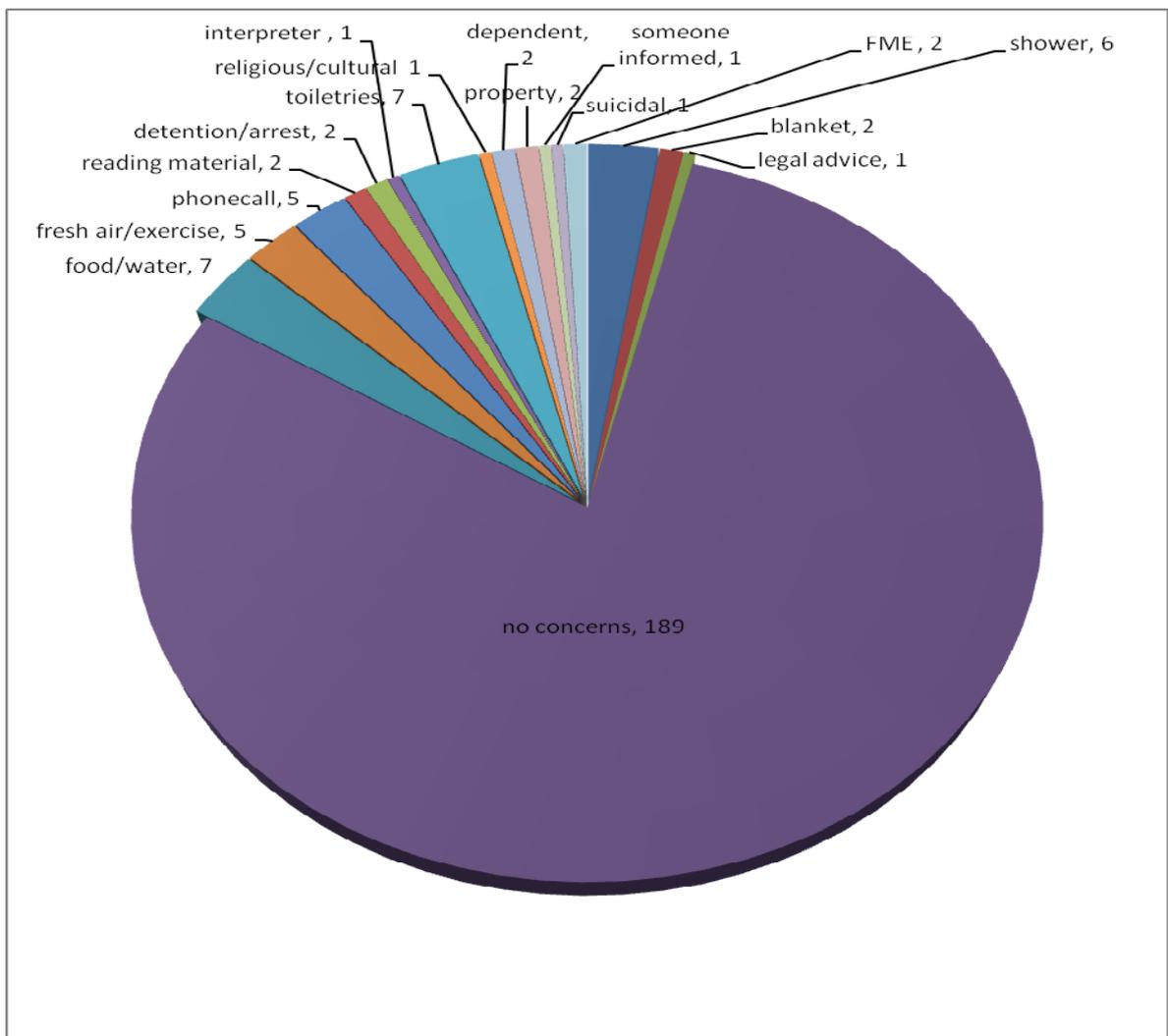
Reason Detainee was seen or not	Annual no
Detainees seen	258
Detainees who refused to be seen	90
Detainees not seen due to other reasons	112

6. Numbers of detainees by type:

	Annual no
<i>Pace detainees in custody at time of visits</i>	396
<i>Immigration detainees in custody at time of visits</i>	31
<i>Other</i>	5

7. Detainees issues

The table below shows the issues or concerns raised by detainees in 2009



Hammersmith BTP (British Transport Police)

BTPA (British Transport Police Authority) has contracted with the MPA to provide a custody visiting service to Hammersmith BTP from 1st March 2009. It has been agreed that the facility will be visited once a month. The Panel commenced visits in April 2009.

The data below shows information on visits for the period April to December 2009

1. Number of Visits

Station	No. of visits
<i>Hammersmith BTP*</i>	6

2. Visits per month:

Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1		1	1		1	1		1

3. Time of Visits

Time Period	Annual no.
0000 – 0359 hrs	
0400 – 0759 hrs	
0800 – 1159 hrs	1
1200 – 1559 hrs	1
1600 – 1959 hrs	4
2000 – 2359 hrs	
<i>Total</i>	6

4. Days of Visits

Day	Annual no.
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	2
Thursday	1
Friday	1
Saturday	2
Sunday	
Total	6

* The BTP facility at Ebury Bridge has been closed since 17th August 2009 and will remain closed until November 2010. Ebury Bridge custody transferred to Hammersmith and a request was made by BTPA for the frequency of visits to be increased. ICVs from the Hammersmith & Westminster panels agreed to sharing visits to Hammersmith BTP i.e. one visit a week.

5. Details of Visits

Reason Detainee was seen or not	Annual no
Detainees seen	0
Detainees who refused to be seen	2
Detainees not seen due to other reasons	0

6. Numbers of detainees by type:

	Annual no
<i>Pace detainees in custody at time of visits</i>	4
<i>Immigration detainees in custody at time of visits</i>	0
<i>Other</i>	0

7. Detainee issues

None

8. Panel Issues

Expiry date of packaged food had elapsed
Upgrade of food preparation area

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, faiths, races, genders, sexualities, abilities and age on the panel.

Members

As stated earlier, the panel at the beginning of the year had achieved its target for membership of 17 panel members. At the end of 2009 the Hammersmith & Fulham panel had fourteen accredited members due to three members leaving the panel. It is hoped that three new members will be appointed in 2010.

Diversity

Diversity monitoring* has allowed the panel to consider how well it matches the community it represents: As of December 2009, the panel comprised of nine women (64%) and five men (36%) with varying diversity in age and ethnicity. The population of the borough as a whole is 51% female and 49% male. The panel has proportionately more people from the black community (14.29%) than the borough (12.9%) and less white people (50.0%) than the borough (76.1%). There are no Asian people as defined by the population projection data** available, but 21% of the panel cannot be categorised in terms of this, many of whom belong to mixed race categories.

* Diversity monitoring exercise has enabled the panel to consider how well it reflects the community it represents. The figures are based on those who have disclosed their diversity information.

**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.

Plans for 2010

The Panel's aims and objectives for 2010 are as follows:

- To make a total of 52 visits to each of the custody suites at Hammersmith and Fulham
- To continue to vary the time of visits in order to provide a better spread
- To maintain and improve upon the level of communication with Hammersmith and Fulham police, the custody manager during panel meetings and with custody staff during visits
- To continue to ensure that the rights and interests of detainees are upheld and to raise concerns promptly and effectively with the local police or the MPA as appropriate
- To recruit an additional three members to the panel and maintain panel membership at a minimum of 17 members.
- 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
- To increase engagement with other panels, through attendance at shared training sessions, conferences and providing resources if appropriate
- Together with the MPA, to continue to promote and raise awareness of the work of Independent Custody Visitors locally
- To attempt, through the application of an equal opportunities recruitment policy, to ensure that the panel continues to reflect the diversity of the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham