



Report to BTPA on Independent Custody Visiting April - June 2009

1. Introduction

This report covers the period from April to the end of June 2009.

From the 1st of April 2009 BTPA has contracted with the MPA to provide a custody visiting service to four of its facilities in London – Tottenham Court Road, Ebury Bridge, West Ham and Hammersmith.

The original contract provided for Tottenham Court Road (TCR) to be visited weekly and Ebury Bridge and West Ham monthly, due to the reduced throughput of detainees at these facilities. Subsequently it was informally agreed that Ebury Bridge would be visited weekly – this was in response to a direct request from Independent Custody Visitors who did not feel that a monthly frequency provided a sufficiently robust safeguard at Ebury Bridge.

During this reporting period, BTPA and the MPA have signed a new SLA with formal provision made for Ebury Bridge to be visited weekly. In addition Hammersmith was added from 1st April with a monthly visit frequency.

2. Overview for this period

The Scheme undertook quite a lot of training during the first quarter of the year. As a result training was more limited in quarter two, with just one Initial training course was held across two evenings in June. The full roll-out of Diversity Awareness training for all ICVs began in June with the first course for non-Chairs taking place on 30th June. Nineteen ICVs from central London panels attended and feedback was very positive. A further course will take place in the autumn, with a programme of 4 courses per year planned from 2010.

The ICV radio ad aired on Choice FM during w/c 23rd April generated 104 hits to the ICV pages of the MPA website. The ad can be listened to on our website.

A variety of activities took place during Volunteers Week in early June.

Our radio ad received was aired on 5 local radio stations. In addition on Tuesday 2nd June, Nusound radio, which broadcasts in East London and has an estimated 2000 listeners per show, featured a fifteen minute live interview with a member of the ICV team who was able to explain and promote the scheme on air, as well thanking our volunteers for their time and commitment. The interview will be available on our website shortly.

The ICV London Facebook page was launched on the 4th of June, to coincide with Volunteers Week. The page allows us to reach a wide and diverse audience and is particularly helpful in raising awareness amongst younger people, whom we have

identified as under represented within the scheme and are therefore a target audience for us. To date the page has 55 fans and can be viewed by typing 'icvlondon' in to the search facility within Facebook.

Finally, an ICV social evening and awards ceremony, hosted by MPA Deputy Chair Kit Malthouse was held on the 4th of June at City Hall. Approximately 120 ICVs attended and awards were presented for long service, as well as assistance to other panels, best performance and most improvement during the year. Individuals who had helped out other panels during the year also received a special mention. We were particularly pleased to be able to present a special long service award to our oldest volunteer, who will be retiring from the scheme on his 86th birthday in October this year. The event was very well received, with ICVs enjoying the live jazz band, as well as the spectacular views from the top of City Hall.

The MPA held a very successful one day community engagement conference "Policing with Authority" on the 27th of June. The Conference included a workshop on independent custody visiting, which aimed to increase community confidence in (custody) policing by raising awareness of the ICV scheme.

Each year panels produce their own borough annual report which is usually presented at the panels AGM, as well as at the local Community Engagement Group meeting. In addition, we have just produced our first scheme-wide annual report, a copy of which will be sent to BTPA.

The self-introduction pilot was extended from 1st June to a further 8 boroughs for a period of six months. The new boroughs selected are: Havering & Redbridge, Sutton, Barnet, Richmond, Westminster – both panels, Islington and Croydon. The initial 4 boroughs are continuing to use self-introduction during this extension. BTPA may wish to consider whether they would like Ebury Bridge included in this new phase of the pilot.

ICV newsletters were produced in April and June.

3. Issues raised by BTPA Stakeholder Committee

The Committee has asked for information on MPA statistics regarding day and time of visit for MPS facilities as a comparison point with visits to BTP facilities. This has been included in this report.

The Committee also asked for more information on the scale of the language problem mentioned in the last report. It seemed in the last reporting period that quite a number of detainees could not be spoken to as they did not speak/understand English. This has also been the case in the present reporting period with a quarter of detainees seen (8 out of 31) at TCR having little or limited English and 1 at Ebury Bridge.

The MPS facilitate the use of Language Line for ICVs in cases where they feel they need to speak with a detainee but direct communication is not possible due to language barriers. I understand that this (alongside translator services) is something that BTPA will also be facilitating if required, subject to individual risk assessments.

4. General review of custody visiting in BTP facilities

Facility	Panel responsible	Target visits	Visits made	Difference
TCR	Camden	13	12	1
Ebury Bridge	South Westminster	13	13 ¹	0
West Ham	Newham	3	3 ²	0
Hammersmith	H&F	3	2	1

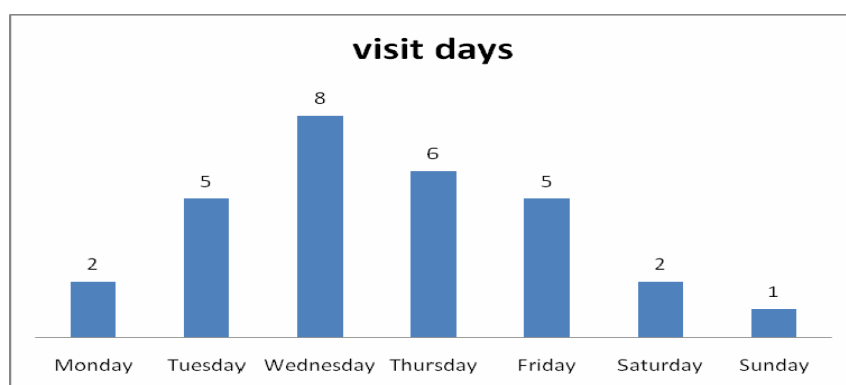
Overview of visits:

As in previous reports, for this period ICVs have not had occasion to report any major concerns about the treatment of detainees or the conditions in which they are held in BTP facilities. Where raised, concerns generally continue to be of an environmental nature, rather than about the treatment of or the provision of rights and entitlements to detainees.

As in the previous report and as noted in section 3, ICVs (particularly in Camden) have continued to note that communication with some detainees has been difficult as they do not speak English. This has been noted for PACE detainees as well those held on behalf of the immigration service.

ICVs in Hammersmith reported a delay with gaining access to the custody suite, but this is the only reported delay. Generally, the reports received in this period across all four facilities remain positive and raise few concerns. Consistently, across all facilities, the most frequently repeated comments concern the helpfulness of staff and the cleanliness of facilities, which continues to demonstrate a positive outcome for BTPA.

Statistics on visits

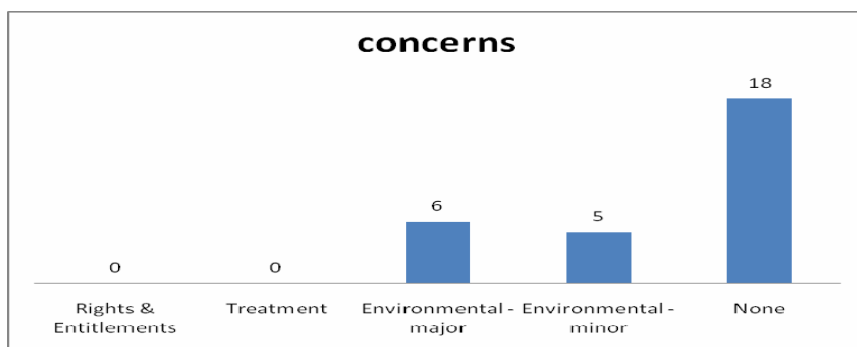


¹ We have been unable to locate the visit report form for the visit which took place during w/c 8th June, but have been assured by the ICV concerned that this visit did take place – this visit has therefore not been included in the statistical information

² The July 2nd visit has been included here, as this was the June visit rearranged. Another visit has been scheduled for July.



Morning = 05:00 -12:00; Afternoon = 12:00 – 17:00; Evening = 17:00 – 20:00; Night = 20:00 – 05:00



5. Information on each facility

Tottenham Court Road

Number of detainees at facility during ICV visits: 45

Number of detainees seen: 31

Percentage seen: 68%

Issues raised:

ICVs commended staff at TCR for dealing promptly with the issue of out of date food and implementing a new system to monitor food stock. An issue was raised about a detainee who was left with their shoelaces on, but it was explained that the detainee had been assessed as being in no danger of self harming³. ICVs continue to comment on the cleanliness of the station and helpfulness of the custody staff, however there were a couple comments dirty water sitting in sinks.

Special considerations:

Camden is a busy borough with 3 custody suites (2 MPS and the BTP facility), each with a significant volume of detainees in custody.

Camden panel is now up to 20 members, with a further two in vetting.

³ I have asked the ICV Co-ordinator who supports this panel to ensure that Camden ICVs are aware that dynamic individual risk assessments are carried out for each detainee, and that it would be inappropriate to remove items of clothing from all detainees as a 'blanket' approach

Ebury Bridge

Number of detainees at facility during ICV visits: 20

Number of detainees seen: 10

Percentage seen: 50%

Issues raised: No issues were raised about the treatment or rights/entitlements of detainees during this period. In terms of the environment, issues were raised about general state of repair, including the condition of the floors, chairs not being fixed to the floor in the interview room and some areas (showers/toilets) needing more cleaning. Improvement was noted in cleanliness as a result of the monthly steam clean. However it seems that despite the repainting of the floor, paint is again bubbling up in some areas (noted on 28/6/09). The panel feel that the physical condition of the facility is extremely poor and that the suite is in urgent need of refurbishment.

Special considerations:

None

West Ham

Number of detainees at facility during ICV visits: 2

Number of detainees seen: 2

Issues raised: This is a non-designated facility and it is rare for ICVs to encounter detainees when they visit. Reports received usually speak of empty cells and a clean custody area. In this period no detainees were present on the occasion when ICVs visited.

Special considerations:

Visits to West Ham are now scheduled on the panel rota for a specific week each month, and ICVs have been attempting to contact the station to find out if detainees are present before they visit. However this has meant that visits sometimes do not take place during the week they are scheduled for and there are difficulties associated with arranging a time which both ICVs can do and then re-scheduling in an effort to visit when detainees are present. By way of illustration, the June visit which was arranged for mid June was eventually carried out on 2nd July. Despite several attempts, the ICVs were unable to find a time when they were both available *and* detainees were present. Some panel members are unhappy with this arrangement and prefer to continue to visit unannounced at a time of their choosing.

Engagement with the police has improved significantly with a BTP police sergeant in attendance at the last several panel meetings.

Hammersmith

Number of detainees at facility during ICV visits: 1

Number of detainees seen: 0

Issues raised:

The only issue was raised during this period was that ICVs experienced a fifteen minute delay in entry in to the custody suite during one visit, due to staff confusion over their status.

Special considerations:

Unfortunately a misunderstanding with the rota meant that the May visit was not carried out, but this has now been rectified and the July visit has already taken place.

6. Additional information

The MPA produces a bi-monthly ICV newsletter which is sent directly to all Independent Custody Visitors. A copy of each edition is sent to BTPA and a copy of the latest edition is attached to this report. All past editions of our newsletter and more information about the scheme, including the ICV Handbook are available on our website: www.mpa.gov.uk/partnerships/icv

7. Upcoming events

We have been working with a software developer to develop a new (improved) visits database. This completion date for this project was delayed, however the database is now in place and 'road testing' started from 1st June.

A key focus for 2009 will continue to be raising awareness of the ICV Scheme amongst Londoners. We will continue to roll out diversity awareness training and to develop further refresher training modules to ensure that ICVs in London are fully equipped to carry out their role. The ICV Handbook is currently being revised and a new version will be available to ICVs by September 2009.

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