



## Report to BTPA on Independent Custody Visiting July - September 2009

### **1. Introduction**

This report covers the period from 1<sup>st</sup> July to the end of September 2009.

From the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2009 BTPA 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 new contract makes formal provision made for Ebury Bridge to be visited weekly, along with Tottenham Court Road (TCR). West Ham is visited monthly and Hammersmith was added from 1<sup>st</sup> April, also with a monthly visit frequency.

### **2. Overview for this period**

The summer period is traditionally a quieter time for the scheme, with less trainings and events taking place. Initial training sessions were held in June and September. The ICV team developed six more refresher training modules including new modules around: juveniles, detainee medical information, self-introduction and NSPIS. These will be rolled out to panels on an ongoing basis. Our Chairs training was further developed by the team and a modular approach has been adopted so that the training is now more adaptable to the needs of both experienced and new/aspiring Chairs. An ICV newsletter was produced in August.

It was announced in July that the MPA would be undertaking a restructuring process to ensure capacity around the delivery of Met Forward, our three year strategy. Consultation on the proposals began at the end of July and in August all stakeholders (including BTPA) received a letter from the CEO Catherine Crawford outlining the rationale for change.

The consultation period has now ended and a final structure has been produced which will have a significant impact on the ICV Scheme as staffing in the team has been reduced from nine to six (a 30% cut). The Scheme Manager post will be deleted and a new post of Criminal Justice & Custody Oversight Team Leader is to be created. Management of the ICV Scheme will be incorporated in the post-holder's remit. The team will also move work units within the MPA. It is envisaged that these changes will be in place by 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010.

ICVs have recently been informed and the reduction in resourcing will inevitably mean that changes will need to be made to how the scheme is delivered across London. The ICV team are currently working on a new delivery structure and once this has been developed, BTPA will be included in the list of stakeholders who will be informed about these changes.

Unfortunately the publication of the new ICV Handbook has been delayed due to the impact of the restructure on its contents. It is anticipated that it will now be published in early 2010.

### 3. Issues raised by BTPA Stakeholder Committee

No specific issues were raised by the Stakeholder Committee in response to the previous report or subsequently.

We understand that BTPA would like ICVs to undertake visits to Wembley when that facility opens. ICVs have been made aware, but we are currently awaiting information on a start date and contact details.

### 4. General review of custody visiting in BTP facilities

Facility	Panel responsible	Target visits	Visits made	Difference
TCR	Camden	13	11	2
Ebury Bridge	South Westminster	13*(6)	6	0
West Ham	Newham	3	3	0
Hammersmith	H&F	3	2	1
Ebury at Hammersmith	South Westminster and H&F	5**	2	3

\*Custody suite closed for 7 weeks during this period

\*\*BTPA requested for frequency of visits to be increased when Ebury Bridge transferred to Hammersmith. Lack of notice of this change meant ICVs were unable to cover all visits required as rotas had been set and additional availability at short notice was limited

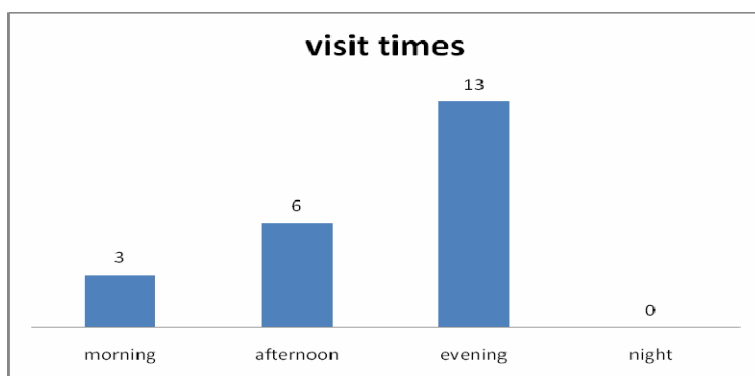
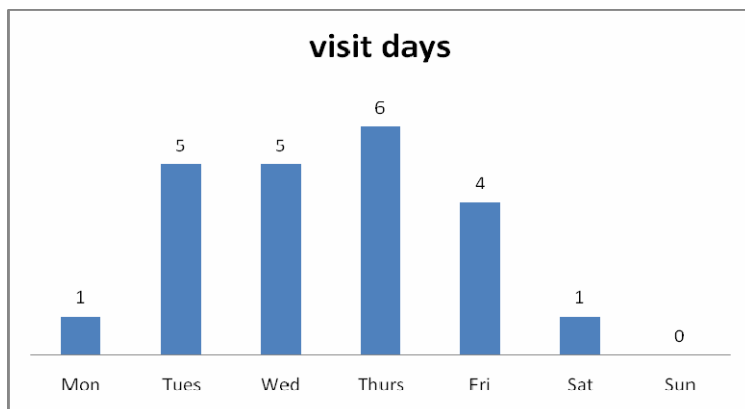
#### Overview of visits:

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. Over this period in particular, very few issues or concerns were raised across the board.

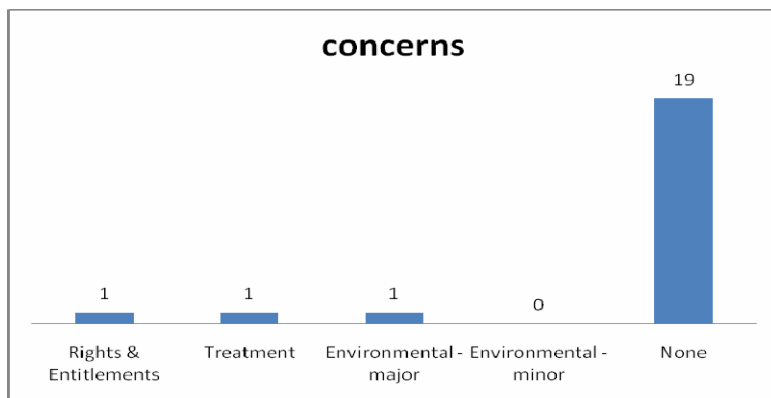
As in previous reports, across all facilities, the most frequently repeated comments concern the helpfulness of staff and the cleanliness of facilities – this continues to demonstrate a positive outcome for BTPA.

Although ICVs are aware of the need to vary the times of their visits, visits in this period have tended to take place at similar times (generally late afternoon/early evening) and only one weekend visit was made across the four custody suites visited. We will continue to encourage panels to vary the times/dates of their visits so that they are more evenly distributed.

### Visit information across the 4 facilities



**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: 47

Number of detainees seen: 24

Percentage seen: 51%

Issues raised: Reports for this period do not raise any issues of concern. Waiting time for an FME was raised during one visit, but it appears that this was resolved

before the ICVs left the custody suite, with the FME arriving 2hrs 40 minutes after first being called.

Special considerations: Two visits were missed during this period, as a result of ICVs not making arrangements in time. Camden panel is now up to 23 members, which is an excellent result for the panel. There are a further two candidates in vetting.

### **Ebury Bridge**

Number of detainees at facility during ICV visits: 9

Number of detainees seen: 5

Percentage seen: 55%

Issues raised: No specific issues of concern were raised during this period, however ICVs did raise a question about ligature points in a cell, which required a response. No other information was provided on the visit report form, so it is not clear which cell was involved or how this was identified. As that station has now been closed for refurbishment it is our assumption that any such issues will be addressed as part of the ongoing work.

Special considerations: Ebury Bridge has been closed since 17<sup>th</sup> August and all visits due were carried out before this date. We have just been informed that it will remain closed until November 2010. We presume detainees will continue to be taken to Hammersmith, but are unclear whether other facilities may be used in addition. We await further information from BTPA on this.

### **West Ham**

Number of detainees at facility during ICV visits: 0

Number of detainees seen: 0

Issues raised: This is a non-designated facility and it is rare for ICVs to encounter detainees when they visit. As with previous reports ICVs comment on the clean custody area. In this period no detainees were present on the occasion when ICVs visited.

Special considerations:

Visits to West Ham continue to be 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 rather than risking missing a visit, ICVs may go ahead with visit in any case, if they are unable to find a time when detainees are present. 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: 2

Number of detainees seen: 2

Issues raised:

The only issue was raised during this period was out of date food, which needed to be disposed of. This was raised during the July visit. The station was 'clean and tidy' and staff 'helpful' during visits.

Special considerations: Unfortunately the August visit was missed as many of the panel were away and it was not possible to make alternate cover arrangements .

## **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 (the last one being the August edition with the next report due this month). 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](http://www.mpa.gov.uk/partnerships/icv)

The new visits database has been completed and used by the team since June.

## **7. Upcoming events**

The MPA restructure and its potential impact on the delivery of the ICV Scheme has inevitably pre-occupied the team's time and attention over the past few months. The new MPA structure was published on 30<sup>th</sup> September and our immediate priority is to develop a workable new structure to support the scheme, taking in to account the major reduction in staffing. A meeting with ICV Chairs is planned for 4<sup>th</sup> November and we hope to be able to present them with the new arrangements at that meeting.

A Saturday ICV training will take place on 17<sup>th</sup> October. Diversity training has been arranged for 16<sup>th</sup> November. We will be sending a number of ICVs from panels across London to the ICVA national conference in Leicester on 14<sup>th</sup> November. Unfortunately staffing reductions mean it will not be possible to organise our annual social in December this year, however a London ICV Conference is being planned for June 2010, to coincide with Volunteer Week.

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