



**Lewisham Independent
Custody Visitors Panel**

**Annual Report Year Ending
31 December 2007**



Contents page

1. Introduction
2. Aims and achievements
 - Visits
 - Meetings and events
 - Administration
3. Panel's report
4. Membership and Recruitment
5. Statistical Analysis of 2007 panel reports
6. Targets and plans for 2008

Introduction

Welcome to the annual report of the Lewisham Independent Custody Visiting Panel (ICVP), covering the period 1 January 2007 to 31 December 2007.

The purpose of this report is to:

- Inform the community of the work of the Lewisham ICVP
- Set out the issues and concerns that have arisen
- Evaluate the panel's performance
- Set out the objectives for 2008.

We hope this will increase knowledge and understanding of the London Independent Custody Visiting Scheme.

Who are Independent Custody Visitors?

Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) are members of the local community who visit police stations unannounced to check on the conditions and treatment of people in police custody.

What do Independent Custody Visitors do?

Once a week two visitors from the Lewisham ICVP attend Lewisham police station at a random unannounced time to make an inspection and speak to detainees. On arrival at the police station, visitors are escorted to the custody area where they interview a number of detainees in their cells and complete a structured report form.

London Independent Custody Visiting Scheme

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 a legal obligation under the Police Reform Act 2002 to provide a custody visiting scheme in London. From its beginnings in Lambeth in 1984, the scheme now operates across all 32 London boroughs and has around 450 volunteers. Each borough has a custody visiting panel to direct local activity, supported by an MPA staff member who coordinates activities and ensures its efficient management.

To be eligible to join the London ICV Scheme you must be 18 or over and live, work or study in the capital. Visitors must have no direct involvement in the criminal justice system. For more information please see the MPA web site on the ICV Scheme at: <http://www.mpa.gov.uk/partnerships/icv/recruit.htm> or contact: ICV Co-ordinator by freephone: 0808 100 1036, minicom: 020 7202 0173, by e-mail: icvrecruitment@mpa.gov.uk or enquiries by post: ICV Co-ordinator, MPA, FREEPOST, LON17808, LONDON SW1H 0DY.

Aims and Achievements

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 check and report on the treatment of detainees in Lewisham police station and to ensure their rights and entitlements are being observed. This is achieved by:

- Making one visit per week
- Holding six weekly panel meetings
- Increasing public awareness of the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme.

Visits

The panel undertook 37 visits in 2007. **This represents 71% of the target number of visits.** The number of visits conducted in 2007 is reassuring.

Visits have been reasonably well spread throughout the week. The panel achieved its aim of undertaking some visits between 00.00 and 08.00. One visit was undertaken between 04.00 and 07.59. Detainees have a right to eight hours undisturbed sleep. However, members visit during these hours to check on the running of the custody suite at night.

Lewisham has a modern well-maintained custody suite. Thankfully the Lewisham ICVP does not encounter issues to do with the physical conditions under which detainees are kept, unlike many London ICVPs visiting older custody suites. However, the panel is never complacent and issues of concern are immediately brought to the attention of the custody staff.

The panel continues to be impressed with the very high standards of custody staff in Lewisham, their helpful, courteous and professional attitude towards visits and the high standard of care shown towards detainees.

Meetings and events

During 2007 the panel met every 6 weeks to discuss, concerns raised on visits, administration issues and to share experiences; **the Panel has a good 62% attendance record.**

Many panel members have busy home and professional lives, and some also maintain other community roles as well as that as an ICV. Nevertheless, attendance at meetings and visit performance has been consistently good.

Inspector Simon James attended the June meeting and Inspector Chris Wood attended the December meeting. The panel are disappointed by police attendance at panel meetings and hope that this will improve in 2008. Police attendance is important to keep the panel advised of any changes or developments at the Lewisham custody suite.

Panel Members have represented the Lewisham Panel at:

- Meetings of the Lewisham Community and Police Forum
- Meetings of the London ICV Chairs with the MPA and
- The Independent Custody Visiting Association National Conference.

Administration

Between 1 January 2007 and 31 March 2007 the Panel Chair Andy Lawrence provided administrative support to the panel alongside a staff member of the MPA.

From 1 April 2007 the MPA centralised the administration of all London ICV Panels. The MPA appointed eight co-ordinators; the Lewisham Co-ordinator, Sarah Walker, is also responsible for Croydon, Lambeth, Merton, Southwark and Sutton (responsibility for Croydon ceased January 2008).

Panel's Report

Welcome to the Annual Report of the Lewisham Independent Custody Visitors Panel covering the period January 2007 to December 2007.

This period has seen significant changes to the London Independent Custody Visiting Scheme. These included:

- The introduction of the National Strategy for Police Information Systems (NSPIS).
- The centralisation of administration by the MPA of the London Panels from April 2007
- The resignation of Andy Lawrence as Panel Chair in April 2007

A new computer system, NSPIS, was introduced to the Lewisham custody suite. After some initial teething problems, the system now works efficiently and effectively.

In April 2007 the MPA centralised the administration of the London ICV Scheme. Some panels were concerned about the changes that centralisation might bring and how this might impact on the independence of our role as custody visitors. However, we welcomed centralisation and from our perspective the changeover has been straightforward.

Andy Lawrence stepped down as panel Chair in April 2007. We would like to thank Andy for his commitment and dedication to the panel as Chair. Since April 2007 panel members have shared the Chair's responsibilities.

The panel's visits have not highlighted any major concerns. In general we found that detainees were treated satisfactorily within the provisions of the law. Many detainees praised the custody staff for the high standard of care shown towards them.

We would like to thank the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) officers in the custody suite and the civilian staff working at the front desk and custody suite who have been professional, courteous, and open to our visits

Lewisham Independent Custody Visitor's 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.

According to London Development Agency figures Lewisham is one of the most ethnically diverse boroughs in London with 43% of residents belonging to a minority ethnic group. The gender figures show 48% female and 52% male.

The membership of the panel is broadly representative of the borough as a whole and diverse in terms of age, gender and ethnicity.

In 2007 the Lewisham panel had 11 accredited members.

Name

Valerie Antonie

The Bean

Trilok Bhalla

Rachael Briggs-Canegan

Michael Canegan

Rose Davidson

Allison Davies

Andrew Lawrence

Chair (resigned as Chair April 2007)

Dionne Lewis

Vice Chair

Leigh Scott

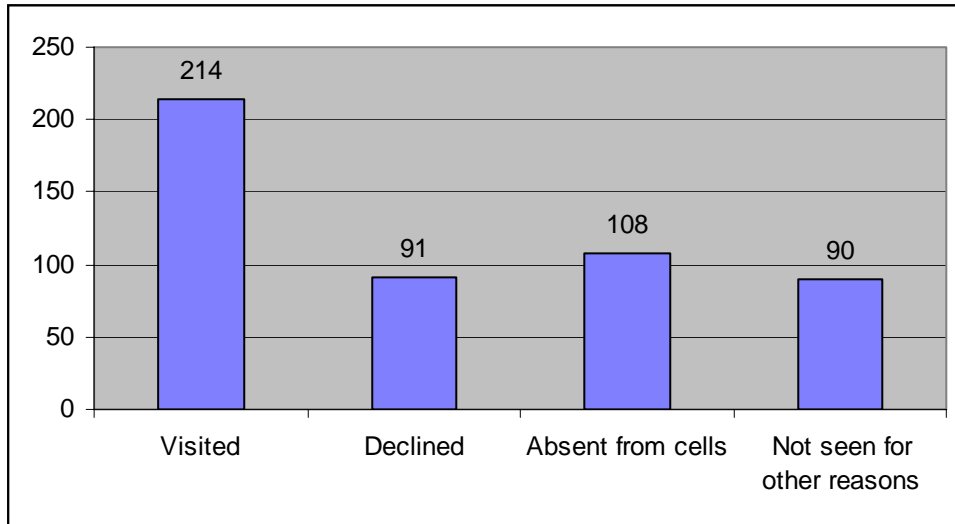
Alan Till

Statistical Analysis of 2007 Panel Reports

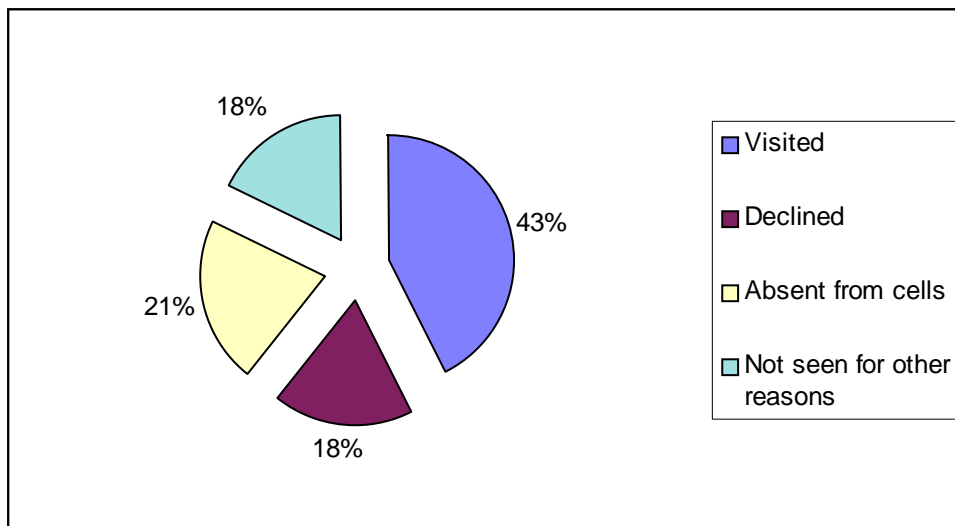
Breakdown of detainees in custody during visits by gender, age and category

PACE Adult Male	375
PACE Juvenile Male	26
PACE Adult Female	61
PACE Juvenile Female	7
Immigration Adult Male	19
Immigration Juvenile Male	0
Immigration Adult Female	6
Immigration Juvenile Female	0
Other Adult Male	5
Other Juvenile Male	0
Other Adult Female	4
Other Juvenile Female	0
Total	503

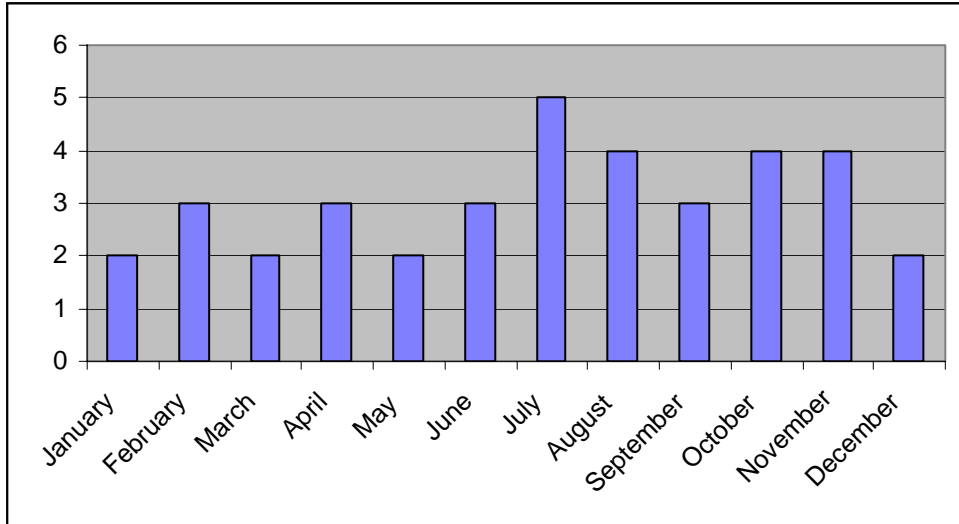
Number of detainees seen by ICVs



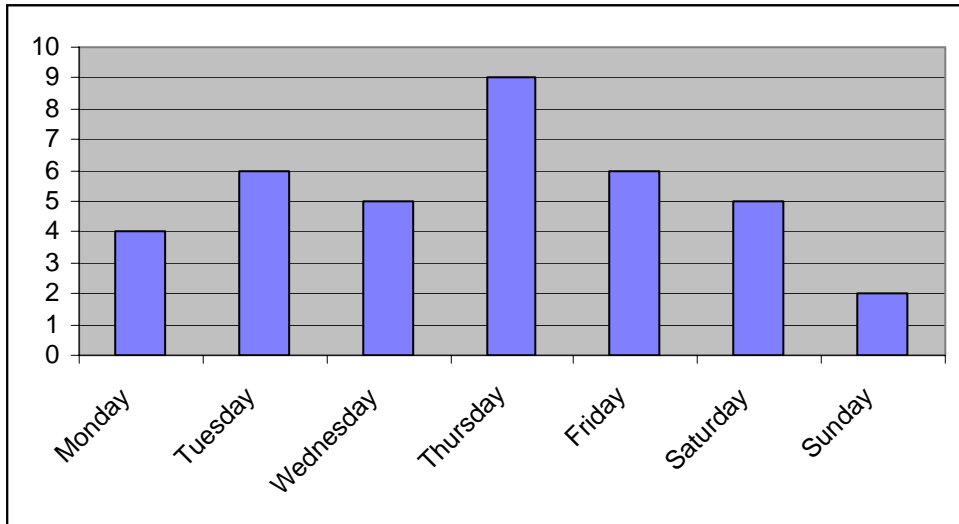
Percentage of detainees seen by ICVs



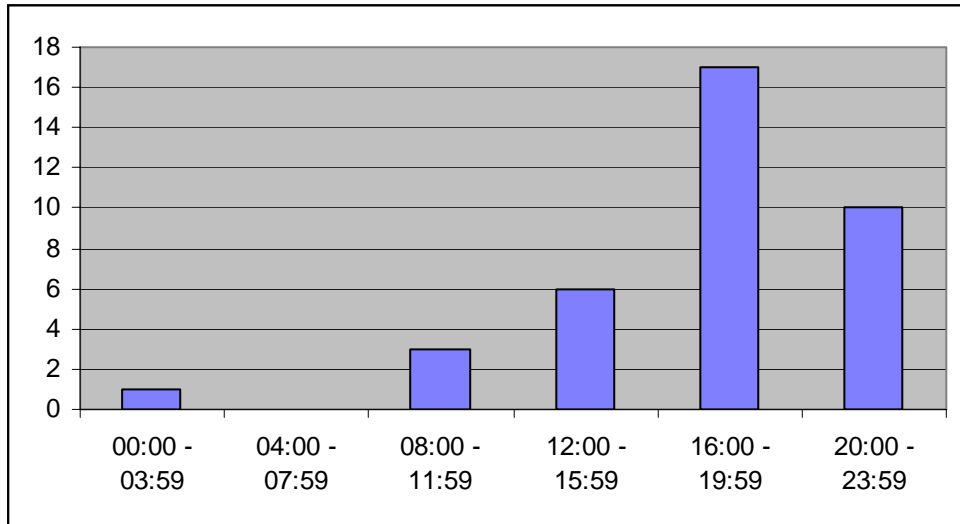
Visits by month



Visits by day



Visits by time



Targets and Plans for 2008

1. To continue to ensure that the rights and interests of detainees are upheld.
2. To make an average of one visit a week; varying the days of the week and times of visits to get an accurate picture of the Custody Suite.
3. To monitor the findings of reports and to discuss concerns with the Police immediately if need be and/or at the next Panel meeting.
4. To endeavour to attend all panel meetings.
5. To ensure that experienced members undertake refresher training courses.
6. To promote and raise awareness of the London ICV Scheme within Lewisham.
7. To continue to assist the MPA to fulfil it's statutory responsibility to provide independent custody visiting in London.

Abbreviations used in the Annual Report

- ICV Independent Custody Visitor
- ICVP Independent Custody Visiting Panel
- MPA Metropolitan Police Authority
- MPS Metropolitan Police Service
- PACE Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984