

Southwark Borough Immigration Detainee Initiative

On 7 June 2004 Southwark Borough opened the detention facility at Southwark Police Station for immigration detainees only. The reasons were:

- High volume of immigration detainees at their operational custody suites at Peckham and Walworth (exacerbated by the increased productivity caused by immigration officers attached to Prisoner Handling Teams and introduction of IS arrest officers) having negative impact upon operational delivery
- Inadequate conditions for medium term immigration detainees
- Lack of a systematic approach to the management of immigration detainees
- Independent Custody Visitors unhappy with the conditions of immigration detainees

What has been introduced?

- Southwark Borough consulted with the Immigration Service (IS), local Community Police Consultative Group, Race Equality Council, 'New Community' help groups and Independent Custody Visitors
- Southwark Police Station dedicated to immigration detainees who have had relevant papers for removal served upon them – no young people
- Staffed by a sergeant and PCs on overtime paid for by cost recovery from the Home Office for immigration detainees
- Provides accommodation of 10 cells and 3 detention rooms
- Accepts immigration detainees from Southwark and Lambeth Boroughs
- Have introduced a 'fail-safe' system to ensure maximum reclaiming of monies from IS
- Daily evening FME surgery in custody suite
- Community volunteers to be recruited to support friends and family visit detainees between 1300 and 1700 daily
- Showers and washing facilities offered twice daily
- Television, CD player, towels for showering, books, English and non English language papers provided daily
- Free association allowed for periods during the day
- Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) and 'New Community' help groups visit detainees and sit on steering group

Feedback/Issues?

- Positive response from community groups, ICV, IS and detainees
- Police officers perceive that it is a positive initiative as it has freed up detention space at Peckham and Walworth
- Running at 5-6 detainees per day
- £68,000 claimed from IS for month of June – overtime cost £26,000
- Start up costs of £1000 with monthly running costs (non overtime) of £150
- Camden ICV, Nick Farrant, visiting Southwark facility on 21 July 2004