



MPA

Metropolitan Police Authority

**HAVING
& REDBRIDGE
INDEPENDENT
CUSTODY VISITORS
PANEL**

**INTERIM
ANNUAL REPORT
APRIL-DECEMBER 2007**



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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the annual report of the Havering & Redbridge Independent Custody Visitors (ICV) Panel.

This (interim) report covers the period from 01/04/07 to 31/12/07.

The purpose of this (interim) report is to give a general overview of the work of the Havering & Redbridge ICV Panel and:

- Evaluate the panel's performance
- Provide the local community and the MPA with information about the visits made including the treatment of those held including the treatment of those held in custody
- Set out issues and concerns that have arisen
- Set out the objectives for 2008.

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. In April 2007 the MPA brought together the custody visiting arrangements managed by the boroughs into one London scheme. The scheme has the full support and cooperation of the Commissioner and the Borough Commanders for Havering & Redbridge, but is independent of the police. The MPA holds overall responsibility for the scheme's management and administration; a member of MPA staff is responsible for supporting the panel.

Prospective custody visitors are volunteers from within the community. The MPA is responsible for recruiting, selecting and appointing all custody visitors and tries to ensure a balance of age, gender and ethnicity. 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.

AIMS & ACHIEVEMENTS

The Havering & Redbridge panel currently makes 1 scheduled visit per week to both Ilford (Redbridge) and Romford (Havering) Police Stations. This meets the minimum requirement of one visit per week per 24/7 custody suite, that the MPA sets panels as a target.

Havering & Redbridge Panel meetings have been held every 2 months, alternating between Ilford (Redbridge) Police Station and Havering Town Hall in Romford. These meetings are well attended by both panel members and the police and the venues continue to be most satisfactory. The panel wish to extend their thanks to Borough Commander of Redbridge, for allowing them to meet at Ilford Police Station.

Some of the panel's police liaison officers have changed over the course of 2007, and in to 2008, with long serving Custody Sergeant Mandy Otten moving to Newham to become the Livescan manager. PC Clive Yeoman has taken on the role of ICV liaison in Redbridge, as he has worked with the panel in the past when Sgt Otten was not available. Other officers to have joined Redbridge borough custody team, in recent months, are Chief Inspector Bill Brame, Inspector Atkins (Custody Manager) and Sergeant Sarah White. Havering borough liaison is currently Acting Inspector Ian Lowe, but for the most part of 2007 Inspector Peter Mills attended the panel's meetings on behalf of the borough.

The police liaison officers continue to assist the panel in its work, and the panel wish to thank them for their cooperation and help in investigating any concerns and observations, and also in answering questions at panel meetings.

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.

CHAIR'S REPORT

This is my first report since the reorganisation in April 2007 of the custody visiting scheme by the MPA.

Custody visiting commenced in the early 1980s as a result of a recommendation from Lord Scarman's report on the causes of the riots that took place in 1981 in a number of major cities throughout the country, most notably in Brixton, London. There was much speculation and suspicion by the people of Brixton, about the treatment of friends and family that were being held in police custody.

Lord Scarman recommended that groups of visitors be established from ordinary local members of the public to visit police stations on a voluntary basis and without advance notice, to ensure that detainees were being treated in accordance with their rights. 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 England and Wales to have a custody visiting scheme in place.

Visits are always made in pairs and custody visitors speak to the detainees, usually in their cell, out of earshot (wherever possible) but within sight of the escorting officer. The Visitors' role is to ensure that detainees have been made aware of their rights and are being treated accordingly. Before leaving the custody area ICVs provide a report on the findings of their visit, which will draw to the attention of the custody officer any matters relating to the detainees which need addressing. The panel aims to send two custody visitors to each of the two police stations in our area unannounced, and at random times, once per week.

The panel meet regularly to discuss their visits and representatives attend these meetings from the MPS stations in its area. Police representatives are present in order to respond to any queries the panel members may have raised in connection with their visits to stations.

The other major aim this year was to increase the number of custody visitors on the panel and endeavour to obtain a mix of people which represents more closely the make-up of the local community we serve, and here again we have met this with rather more success than we have had in the recent past.

Since it was first introduced all those years ago custody visiting has taken on a vital role in checking that detainees are being treated in accordance with their rights and that their basic needs are being met - needs such as the provision of clean cells, clean bedding, appropriate food and showering and washing facilities - and reassuring the public that this is so. We have found that on the whole the police welcome our input as independent members of the public observing and recording what is happening in the custody suite at any time, as well as sometimes bringing pressure to bear when necessary in order to get problems sorted out. For their part the detainees are often only too pleased that somebody has taken the trouble to check that they are being treated properly. Generally during its visits the panel has found that

detainees held in custody are being treated correctly and in accordance with their rights and that the police in this part of London continue to demonstrate high standards of professionalism and commitment in their work.

We have had some issues that keep recurring, the main one being the sharps bin in the FME (Forensic Medical Examiner) room being left out and often full, and that if a determined detainee wanted to, a distraction of the officer could result in that detainee grabbing the sharps bin, and taking a syringe from it, using it possibly then as a weapon. We are continuing to highlight this issue but we are finding that it is the FMEs who seem not to understand our point.

Most other issues have been addressed, including the phones in the station reception and custody suits not working, the improved provision of blankets, the availability of showers, and the cleanliness of the kitchen. Although we do still get the occasional problems the police, once notified, usually put right.

Thanks go to all officers we come in to contact with. Overall the police work very hard, are often understaffed and overworked, but despite all that they always have a cheery word for us.

I must also greatly thank my Vice-Chair Amanda McKimmie for the tireless work she has done, standing in at the last minute for visits and collating a lot of information for the good of the panel. Thank you Amanda.

Stephen Phillips
Havering & Redbridge ICVP Chair

May 2008

RECRUITMENT AND 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.

In 2007 the Havering & Redbridge panel was made up of the following accredited members.

| Name | Appointed |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| Amanda-Rose McKimmie | 2003 |
| Amarjit Phull | 2002 |
| Frederick (George) Ford | 2004 |
| Joyce Ragbir | 2004 |
| Norma Williams | 2003 |
| Robert Lee | 2001 |
| Roy Pursey | 2002 |
| Stephen Philips | 2000 |
| Roger Dixon | 2006 |
| Philip Feldman | 2006 |
| Bernice Alexander | 2003 |

The Following Member(s) Joined

| | |
|-----------------|------|
| Leena Chotai | 2007 |
| Alison Maybin | 2007 |
| Victor Omoyinmi | 2007 |
| Deborah Regal | 2007 |

The Following Members Resigned/De-accredited

| | |
|------------------|------|
| Amanda Burton | 2002 |
| David Hill | 2003 |
| Diane Page | 2003 |
| Eric Lynch | 2007 |
| Carole Oswin | 2007 |
| Sulman Shah | 2007 |
| Josephine Murphy | 2007 |
| Rosaleen McHugh | 2007 |
| Irene Leech | 2004 |
| Trevelyn Lazaro | 2004 |
| Joseph Nygate | 2005 |

The panel comprises of 8 men and 7 women with varying diversity in age and ethnicity.

Recruitment

There are currently 2 applicants who were recently successful at interview who are awaiting the completion of the vetting and accreditation process.

Should these final 2 applicants be successful the wide diversity of its members would be increased.

It is anticipated that because the panel operates well with the number of visitors it currently has, any further recruitment beyond what is already ongoing will be limited to filling vacancies created by resignations.

VISITS TO POLICE STATIONS

The panel have also made some visits to Barkingside custody suite over the year, as this has been used in recent months for Operation Safeguard¹ and when other nearby stations have been closed for maintenance. However, despite cells being made available they haven't always been used and ICVs have often arrived when there have been no detainees to see. Good standards of care have been noted at all stations however, despite the pressures on police.

There have been few major concerns this year. The relationship with the custody staff has continued to be positive and the panel are happy with the way in which custody staff have explained the ICV role to detainees, and answered any queries they might have during visits. It is a source of satisfaction to the panel that there have been few complaints, if any, from detainees on how they are treated at Ilford and Romford.

¹ Operation Safeguard is the way the Home Office are currently addressing the shortage of prison spaces, by housing prisoners in spare police cells. The Met currently provides up to 50 cells per night to the Home Office on a full cost recovery basis.

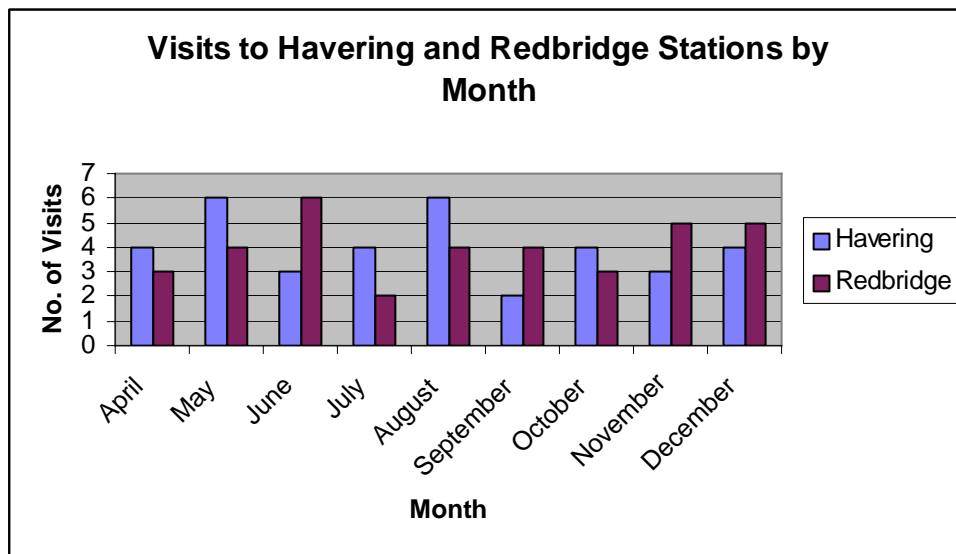
DATA FROM PANEL VISITS

Visit Figures from 1 April to 31 December 2007

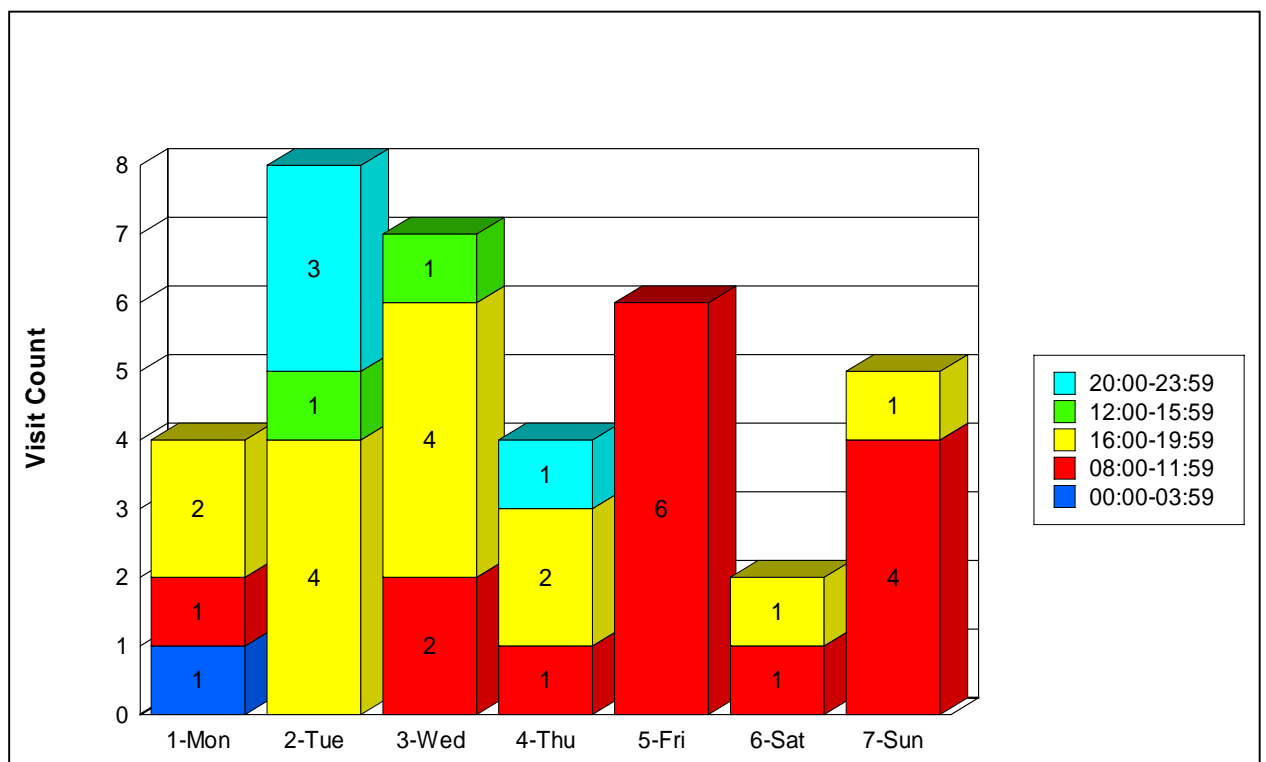
1. Number of Visits

| Station | Annual no. of visit | % Annual Target |
|--------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Ilford | 36 | 92% |
| Romford | 36 | 92% |
| Total | 72 | 92% |

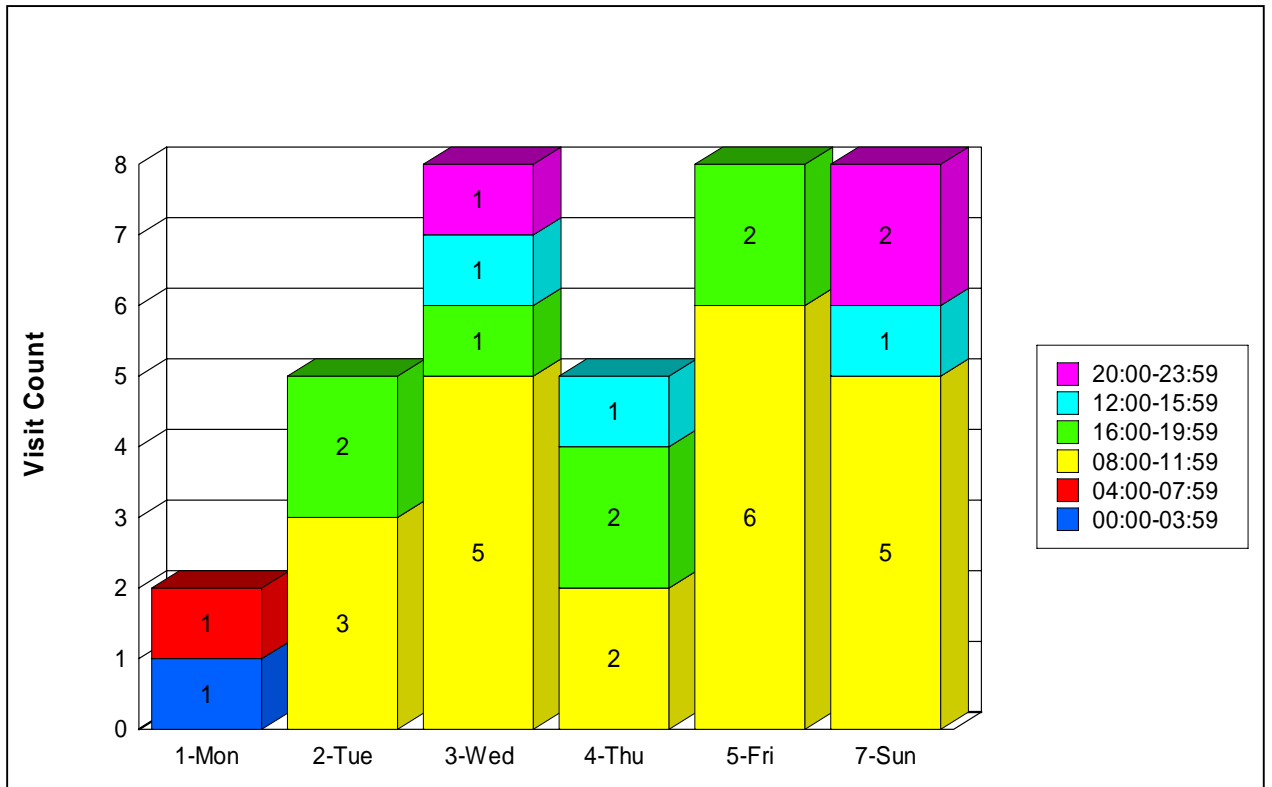
*MPA Annual Target is 52 visits per 24/7-custody suite – pro rata where applicable.



2. a. Time and Day of Visits - Redbridge Stations

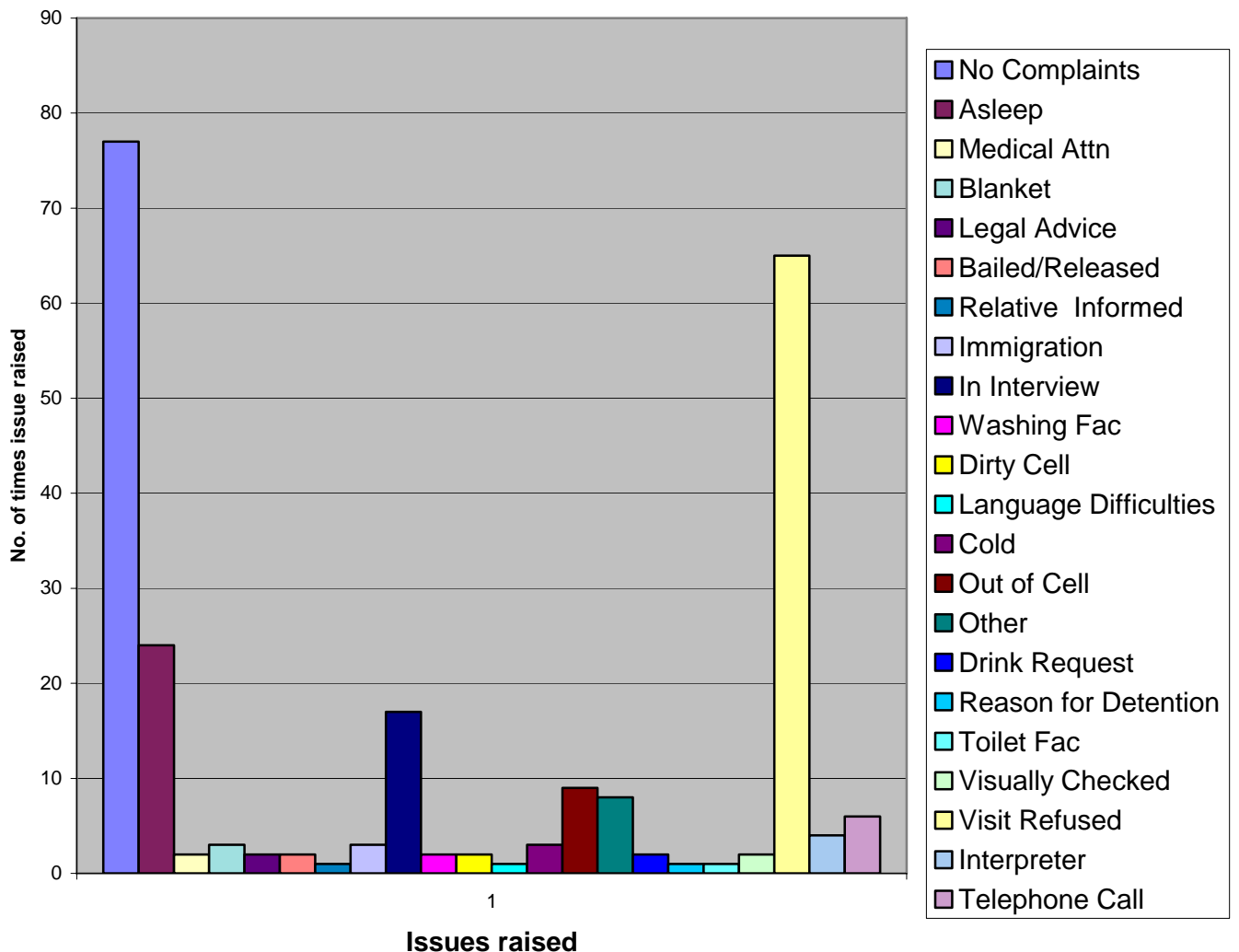


2. b. Time and Day of Visits – Havering Stations



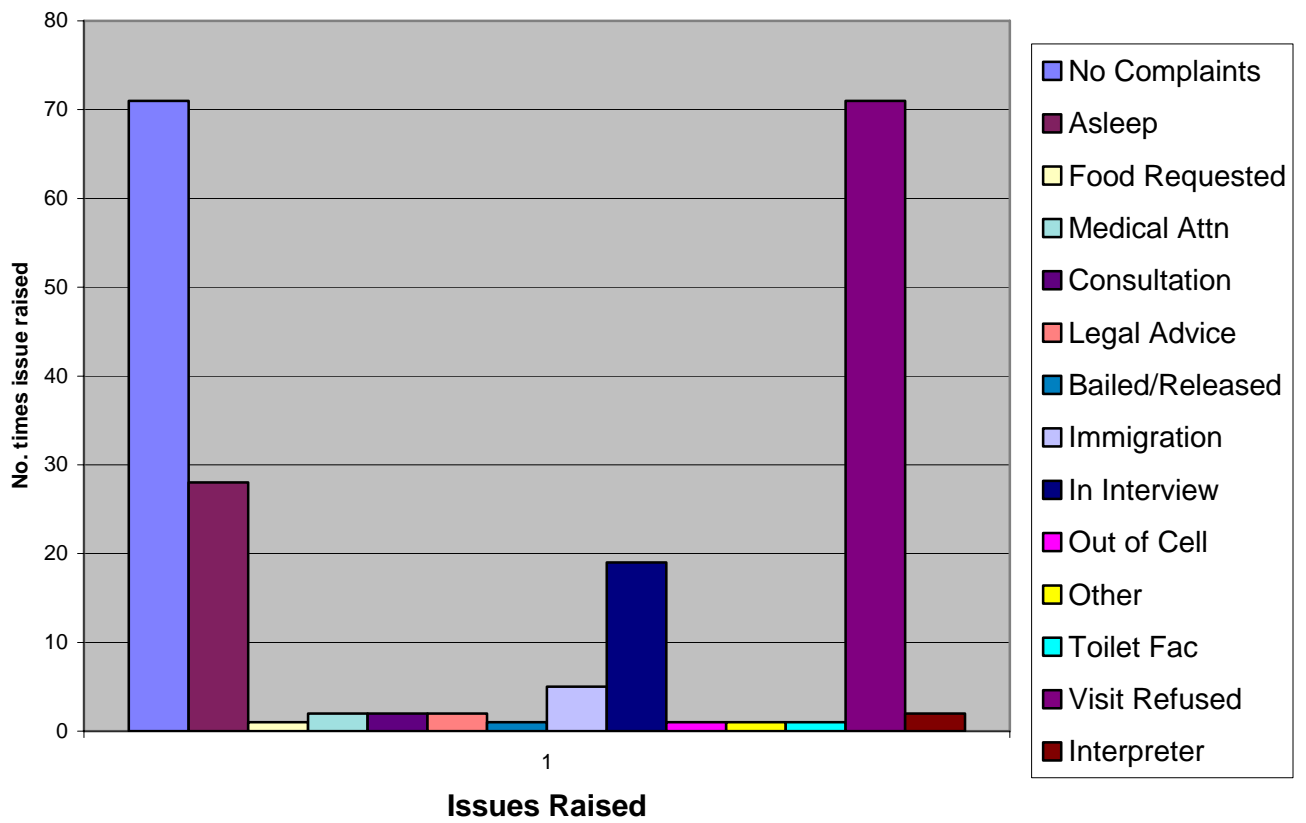
3. Issues raised by detainees - Redbridge

Main issues/concerns raised by detainees



Havering

Main issues/concerns raised by detainees



Plans for Forthcoming Year 2008

Targets:

- A minimum of 1 visit per week to Ilford and Romford Police Stations.
- A monthly visit to Barkingside Station whilst it is used for Operation Safeguard.
- To record the diversity of Havering & Redbridge's panel membership in comparison with the make-up of the borough, and how the panel reflects or not the community it represents.
- To ensure panel membership is maintained at a minimum of 15 volunteers with an aim to recruit up to a level of 18 members, which is deemed sufficient for 2 stations.
- The panel be represented at or kept informed of meetings of the Havering and Redbridge Community and Police Consultative Groups.