



MPA

Metropolitan Police Authority

Lambeth Independent Custody Visiting Panel

Annual Report 2008



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Introduction

Welcome to the annual report of the Lambeth Independent Custody Visiting Panel (ICVP). This report covers the period 1 January 2008 to 31 December 2008.

The purpose of this report is to give a general overview of the work of Lambeth ICVP and:

- Inform the local community and the MPA about the treatment of people held in police custody in the London borough of Lambeth;
- Set out the issues and concerns that have arisen during 2008;
- Evaluate the panel's performance; and
- Set out the panel's objectives and plans for 2009.

We hope this will increase knowledge and understanding of the Lambeth Independent Custody Visiting Panel.

Who are Independent Custody Visitors?

Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) are members of the local community who volunteer their time to 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 Lambeth ICVP attend Brixton, Kennington and Streatham police stations 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 speak to a number of detainees in their cells and complete a structured report form.

History of Independent Custody Visiting

The Independent Custody Visitors scheme, formally known as the Lay Visitors' scheme was introduced in the mid-1980s following a recommendation in Lord Scarman's report into the 1981 Brixton riots. 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 the country to have a Custody Visiting Scheme in place.

The MPA and 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 23 Members who scrutinise and support the work of the police. The MPA promotes equality and diversity within the

police service and works in partnership with the police 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 to provide a custody visiting scheme in London. The scheme has the full support and cooperation of the Commissioner and the Borough Commander for Lambeth, 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 each panel.

How to become an Independent Custody Visitor

The MPA is seeking to recruit visitors from as many different backgrounds and communities as possible to ensure the scheme reflects London's diversity.

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 example, they cannot be serving police officers or staff, special constables or magistrates.

For more information please see the MPA web site on the ICV Scheme at: <http://www.mpa.gov.uk/partnerships/icv/get-involved/> 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.

Chair's Report

The past year was both interesting and challenging for the Lambeth Independent Custody Visitors Panel.

We always aim to visit each of the custody suites in Lambeth once a week and although we only achieved a low percentage of our visits a number of factors contributed to this. However, our core panel members are deeply committed to custody visiting and have to be commended for carrying the continued burden of visits with some ICVs doing two visits a week.

I would also like to thank those members who have left the panel for the time they gave as Independent Custody Visitors. In particular I would like to thank my predecessor, former Chair Doye Akinlade. Doye resigned from the panel in October after 6 years service and we all wish him well in his future endeavours. Sadly Selvin Scott passed away very suddenly in June 2008 after 8 years as an ICV. He had also acted as an Appropriate Adult for the Lambeth Police for 8 years. His funeral took place at Corpus Christi Brixton Hill, and the Church was full, with many police officers attending. He will be deeply missed by all who knew him.

In 2008 we recruited 5 new members who bring considerable knowledge and enthusiasm to the scheme. However, in 2009 we will continue to recruit more new members as we are still short of our ideal members of around 24 volunteers. As we continue to develop and grow in 2009 and we will be placed in a better position to deliver to our community the reassurance that independent checks on the welfare of those in police custody are being carried out.

Although most of our reports have not raised any significant issues the panel has expressed their frustration that some police officers were not aware of the role ICVs play in the custody suite and occasionally immediate, unannounced entry to the custody areas was a particular problem at the front desk of the three Lambeth stations, Brixton, Streatham and Kennington. In May, I attended Sergeant's training sessions at Ember Court, also Kennington in June, when I gave a short introduction to Independent Custody Visiting with the history of how the scheme came into being following the Brixton disorders and the Scarman Report in 1982. I will continue to address newly appointed police recruits and sergeant's training sessions as and when required by the Lambeth Police. I plan to train the more experienced members of the Lambeth Panel in this role.

During ICV visits to the three Lambeth stations it became apparent that washes / showers were not always offered to the detainees who are not aware that they must ask for a shower or wash if it is not offered. The Panel believe that this is unacceptable as it part of the Detainee's Rights and Entitlements and is especially relevant if the detainee is held overnight and often even longer in the case of Immigration detainees. Unlike Brixton and Kennington stations, Streatham does not have shower facilities but instead detainees must use a sink in the corridor, which is in view of the CCTV. A Home Office directive stated that detainees could use a wash bowl in the cell. However, this facility was not available for sometime as the

wash bowls were not in the stores, despite questions being raised many times. The Panel and I have been assured that this situation has now been rectified. In 2009 the Panel will continue to monitor the provision of washes in all of custody suites. We hope the police will continue to work with us flexibly – ensuring that showers or washes are offered. Generally however, the custody officers and staff of the Lambeth custody suites are helpful towards the ICVs, and the Panel thanks them for their assistance.

The Panel continues to supply Bibles, Koran's, prayer mats, books and magazines for the use of detainees, which are most welcomed.

The panel's police liaison officer, Inspector Paul Huitson, continues to assist the panel in its work, and our thanks go to him for his professionalism and help in investigating the panel's concerns and answering questions at panel meetings.

Finally this report reflects the commendable contributions made by the volunteers of the Lambeth panel. My sincere thanks to my colleagues on the panel for their dedicated service and commitment throughout 2008. Custody visiting could not be maintained without their selfless support.

Jane Warwick
Lambeth ICVP Chair

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 make unannounced visits to the custody suites in Lambeth to check and report on the treatment of people in police custody and to ensure their rights and entitlements are being observed.

This is achieved by:

- Making one visit per week to Brixton, Kennington and Streatham police stations;
- Holding monthly panel meetings; and
- Increasing public awareness of the London ICV Visiting Scheme.

Visits

In 2008 the panel made a total of 81 visits against the target of 156. This represents an achievement of 52% of the panels visiting target. 32 visits were made to Brixton, 22 to Kennington and 25 to Streatham.

There were a number of setbacks which prevented the panel operating at its best. With five panel members leaving during the year, the panel remained understaffed, finding it a considerable challenge to fulfil their visiting target. However the panel members are dedicated individuals, committed to ensuring detainees are treated well and that their rights are being respected. They carried out as many visits as possible in the circumstances. By the latter part of 2008 the panel had received a large number of applications and it is hoped that the panel's performance will improve in 2009 with the addition of new members.

A good spread of visiting times was achieved in 2008. However, fewer visits were conducted on Sundays than other days. 9 visits were made between 08:00 and 11:59 and 11 visits were conducted between 12:00 and 15:59. 42 visits were made between 16:00 and 19:59 and 18 visits were conducted between 20:00 and 23:59. One visit was conducted between 00:00 and 07:59. Although detainees have a right to eight hours undisturbed rest it is important that a small number of visits take place between these times to ensure the panel checks on the running of the custody suite at night. The panel will aim to vary the timing of visits more in 2009.

Detainee concerns cover a wide range of subjects and in the majority of cases there were no significant issues raised. However, there have been a number of recurring issues that have been recorded in ICV reports during 2008 (see page 12).

The panel members continue to donate books and magazines for detainees. These are given to detainees by custody staff following proper risk assessment.

Meetings and events

The panel meets monthly to discuss concerns raised on visits, administration issues and to share experiences and the panel has a 79% attendance record. Panel meetings were not held in May or December. A police representative attends each meeting. Inspector Huitson attended 9 meetings and is the police liaison with the panel. Inspector Gurr attended 2 meetings and Superintendent Sutherland attended 1 meeting in his capacity as the Acting Borough Commander. All officers kept the panel advised of developments at Lambeth custody suites and within borough. The panel would like to thank them for their attendance at meetings throughout 2008.

During the year the Chair, Vice Chair and Panel Members represented the Lambeth Panel at:

- Meetings of the Lambeth Community and Police Consultative Group
- Meetings of the London ICVP Chairs and Vice Chairs with the MPA
- A meeting of the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the South / South-East Cluster of ICVPs
- The London Independent Custody Visiting Conference
- The MPA Christmas Social

The panel continue to use every opportunity to raise public awareness of independent custody visiting in Lambeth and London-wide.

Panel Membership

Lambeth has a population of approximately 283,879. According to DMAG¹ figures 38% of the population of Lambeth belongs to a black and minority ethnic group (BME) and 62% belong to the white community. The gender figures show the population is 51% female and 49% male.

Recent diversity monitoring has allowed the panel to consider how well it reflects the community it represents. According to available figures the panel is broadly representative of the borough in terms of race with 45% of the panel belonging to a BME group and 55% from the white community. 73% of the panel are male and 27% are female.

Members of Lambeth ICVP

Joseph Akano	
Doye Akinlade	Resigned October 2008
Ed Brydson	Joined October 2008
Pauline Burrell	
Nick Cosin	
Mohammed Davies	Joined April 2008
Ed Fotheringham	Transferred November 2008
Desmond Fuller	Resigned August 2008
Shemi Leira	Joined April 2008
Lloyd Leon	
Rita Nwamadi	Resigned April 2008
Sophie Moorcock	
Sandra Prosper	Joined May 2008
Selvin Scott	Member until June 2008
Jane Warwick	
Raymond Whitaker	
Mark Wood	Joined December 2008

In 2008 Doye Akinlade, Desmond Fuller and Rita Nwamadi resigned from the panel and Ed Fotheringham moved to the Hammersmith & Fulham panel. We thank them for their service to the panel and the local community and wish them well for the future. In particular the panel would like to thank Doye Akinlade for the time and effort he dedicated to the panel and the local community as the panel's Chairperson. Doye Akinlade Chaired the panel's for 6 years.

The panel would like to thank Selvin Scott who passed away in June 2008. Selvin was a much respected and valued panel member. The panel greatly miss him and his generous nature, wonderful sense of humour and enthusiastic contribution to the panel and Lambeth.

¹ Population and diversity figures are based on projections derived from the 2001 census calculated by DMAG - the Data Management and Analysis Group - based at the Greater London Authority (GLA). These data comparisons are confined to apparent strands of diversity only.

Recruitment

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. Since April 2007, panels have been asked to adhere to recruitment and interviewing guidance provided by the MPA.

Throughout 2008 we actively promoted Lambeth ICVP with the aim of recruiting new members. Local recruitment included sending posters and leaflets to all Lambeth libraries, Citizen's Advice Bureau's, free legal advice centres and various doctors and dentist surgeries and colleges across Lambeth. The MPA also advertised regularly in the Metro and Evening Standard newspapers. The panel is registered with Lambeth Volunteer Centre and advertises on the national volunteering website www.do-it.org.uk.

Through these efforts we have raised the profile of Lambeth ICVP and in 2008 the panel successfully recruited 5 new members. However, despite recruitment efforts our membership was reduced to 12 active members by the end of 2008.

The target membership for a panel that visits 3 custody suites is around 24 members plus additional members as reserves. This number allows for one visit by a pair of visitors each week to the 3 Lambeth custody suites. It also allows each visitor to conduct one visit per month.

We will continue to seek new members of all ages and from all parts of the community in 2009.

Station Visit Issues

There are three custody suites in Lambeth. These are located in Brixton, Kennington and Streatham police stations. The panel makes weekly, unannounced visits to each custody suite.

When visitors speak to detainees they record any concerns that detainees raise with them. Visitors do not wake detainees if they are asleep, but they will usually visually check the detainee through the wicket in the door. Visitors check concerns raised by detainees against their custody record (where the detainees give permission for them to do so), and will bring the matter to the attention of the police if they remain concerned about any aspect of the detainee's treatment or welfare. Most minor concerns can be resolved during the course of the visit and only more significant concerns or more complicated issues will be discussed at panel meetings.

Most of our reports have not raised any significant issues that had to be brought to the attention of the MPA or which required a response from the local police. However, there have been some recurring issues of concern:

- Entry to the custody suite was delayed on 7 occasions. On arrival at the public enquiry counter at the police station, ICVs must identify themselves and the purpose of their visit. At this point ICVs should be admitted immediately to the custody area. Access can be delayed only where ICVs may be placed in danger. If delays occur a full explanation should be given to the ICVs and is included in the ICV visit report.
- An ongoing concern has been the lack of knowledge and awareness some custody officers have of the ICV scheme. In order to supplement the initial training given on the ICV scheme Inspector Huitson arranged for Jane Warwick to give talks on the ICV scheme to police officers in January 2008. The talk was very well received by the officers and the panel are keen to attend more police training events.
- The panel has raised concerns about the access that detainees have to showers and wash facilities. Detainees do not seem to be aware that they need to ask for a shower or wash if they want one, and when they do ask are sometimes told that there are not the staff available to facilitate it. The panel would like to see all detainees held overnight and taken to court in the morning being offered a shower before they go.
- The panel continue to be concerned about the detention facilities at Streatham custody suite. Streatham custody suite does not have shower facilities. In accordance with a Home Office direction the police must provide detainees with a bowl of water to wash in the cells. However, on 5 occasions the panel have reported that a wash bowl could not be located. The panel believe that this is unacceptable and will continue to monitor the facilities at Streatham.

- Until 2008 the Lambeth Independent Appropriate Adult Group (LIAAG) provided trained and security cleared volunteers as Appropriate Adults for juveniles when parents had refused to attend or Social Services had been unavailable. We hope the new service provided by The Appropriate Adult Service (TAAS) will be as effective as that provided by LIAAG and the panel will monitor appropriate adult services for juveniles throughout 2009.
- On 3 occasions during 2008 detainees have raised allegations of assault or maltreatment on arrest. In such cases the custody visitors have always ensured that the detainee is aware of and understands the procedure to make a complaint. In addition they have checked the details of the allegation with the detainee's custody record (when the detainee gives permission for them to do so) and raised the issue with an Inspector if they have any concerns.

Despite these issues overall the panel is impressed with the Officers in the Division and the standard of care shown towards detainees. The panel has an excellent working relationship with the police representative, Inspector Paul Huitson, and the panel is grateful for his diligent and prompt responses to the issues they raise.

Statistical Analysis of 2008 Panel Reports

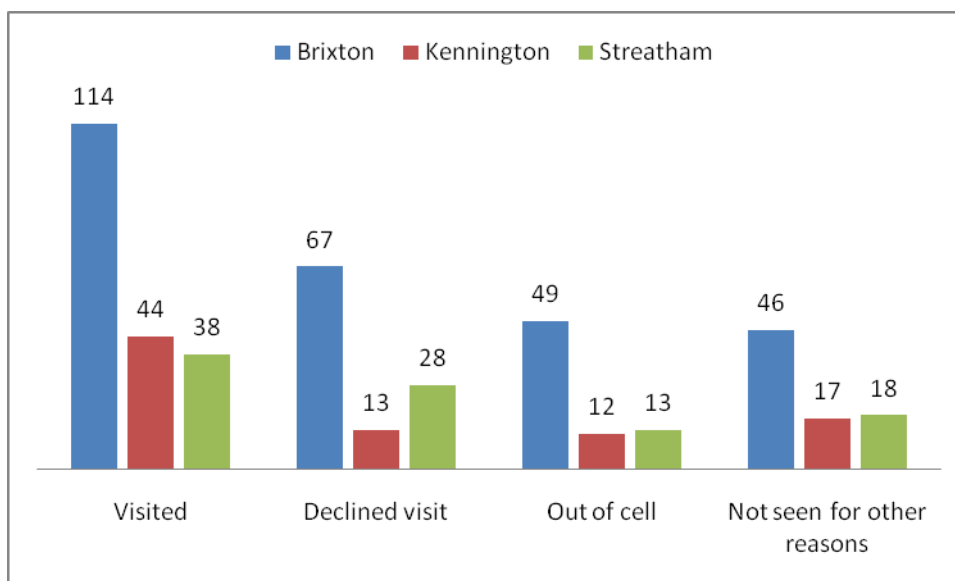
Number of detainees held in Lambeth Custody Suites

Brixton	6677
Kennington	4445
Streatham	2937
Total	114059

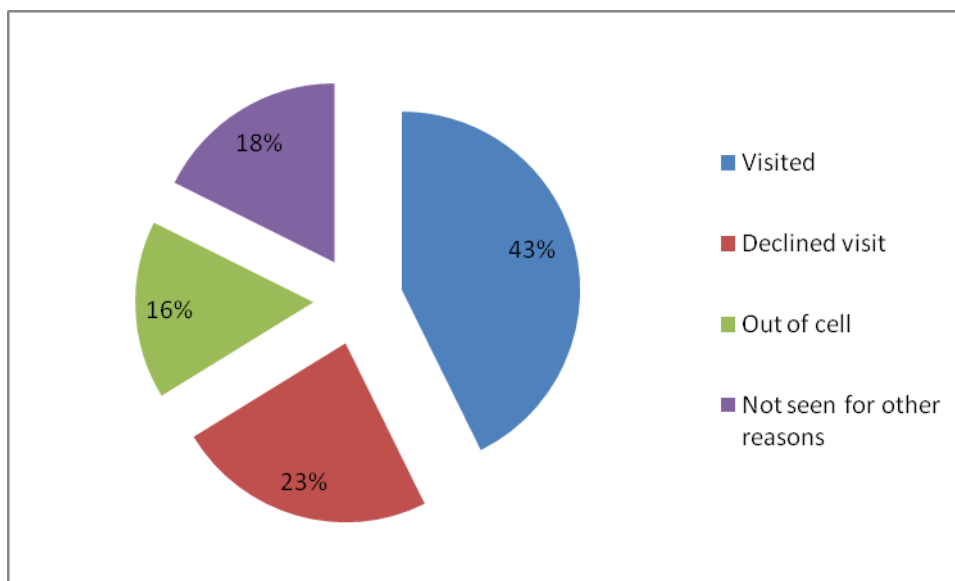
Breakdown of detainees in custody in Lambeth Custody Suites during visits by gender, age and category

	Brixton	Kennington	Streatham
PACE Adult Male	202	61	67
PACE Juvenile Male	20	7	11
PACE Adult Female	31	7	6
PACE Juvenile Female	0	0	1
Immigration Adult Male	10	3	4
Immigration Juvenile Male	0	0	0
Immigration Adult Female	1	1	0
Immigration Juvenile Female	0	0	0
Other Adult Male	12	6	8
Other Juvenile Male	0	0	0
Other Adult Female	0	1	0
Other Juvenile Female	0	0	0
Total	276	86	97

Number of detainees seen by ICVs



Percentage of detainees seen by ICVs

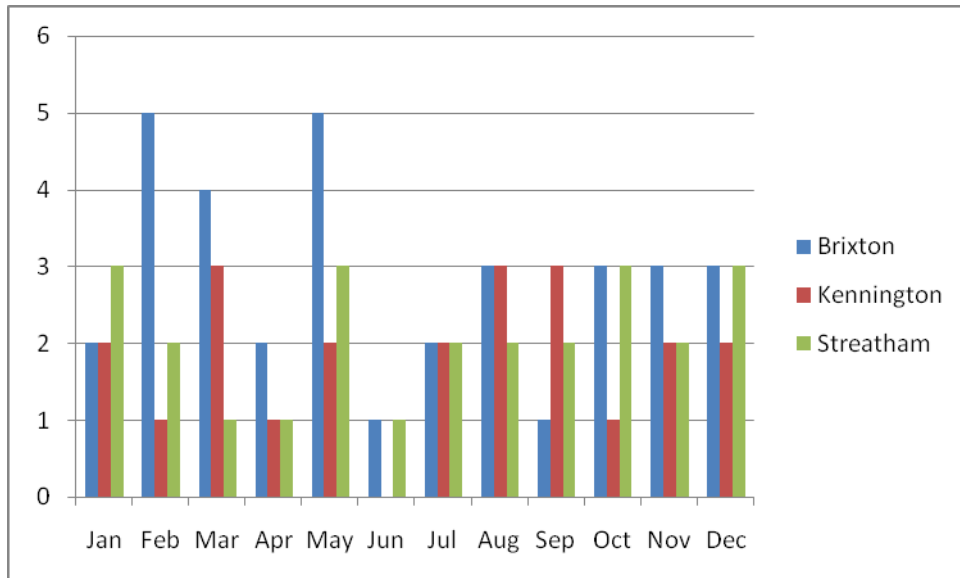


The charts above show the number of detainees seen by ICVs in Lambeth during 2008. Detainees are not obliged to speak to ICVs and may decline a visit if they so wish. Additionally detainees may not be visited because they are out of the cell.

Detainees may not be seen by ICVs for other reasons. Other reasons a detainee may not be seen include detainees who are asleep at the time of the visit, detainees released from custody whilst ICVs are speaking to another person, detainees suffering the effects of drink or drugs and detainees who the police advise ICVs not to visit for the ICV's own safety. In such circumstances the ICVs will visually check the detainee through the wicket in the cell door.

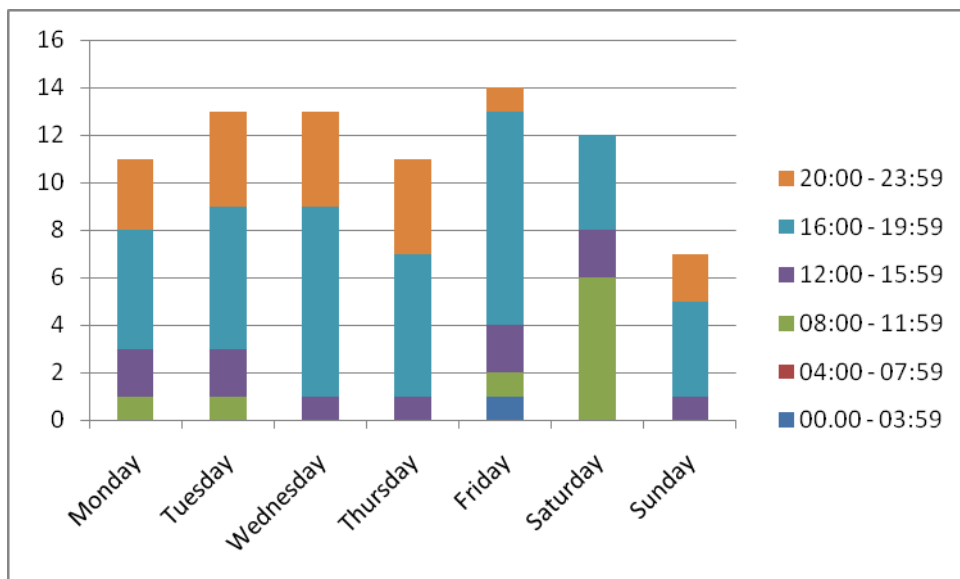
Visits per station by month

The normal visiting frequency for 24/7 operational custody suites in London is one visit per week. As can be seen below the Lambeth panel have not achieved this target during 2008. A barrier to achieving the panel's visit target was insufficient number of members for much of the year. It is hoped that visiting frequency will improve in 2009 thanks to the recruitment of new members.



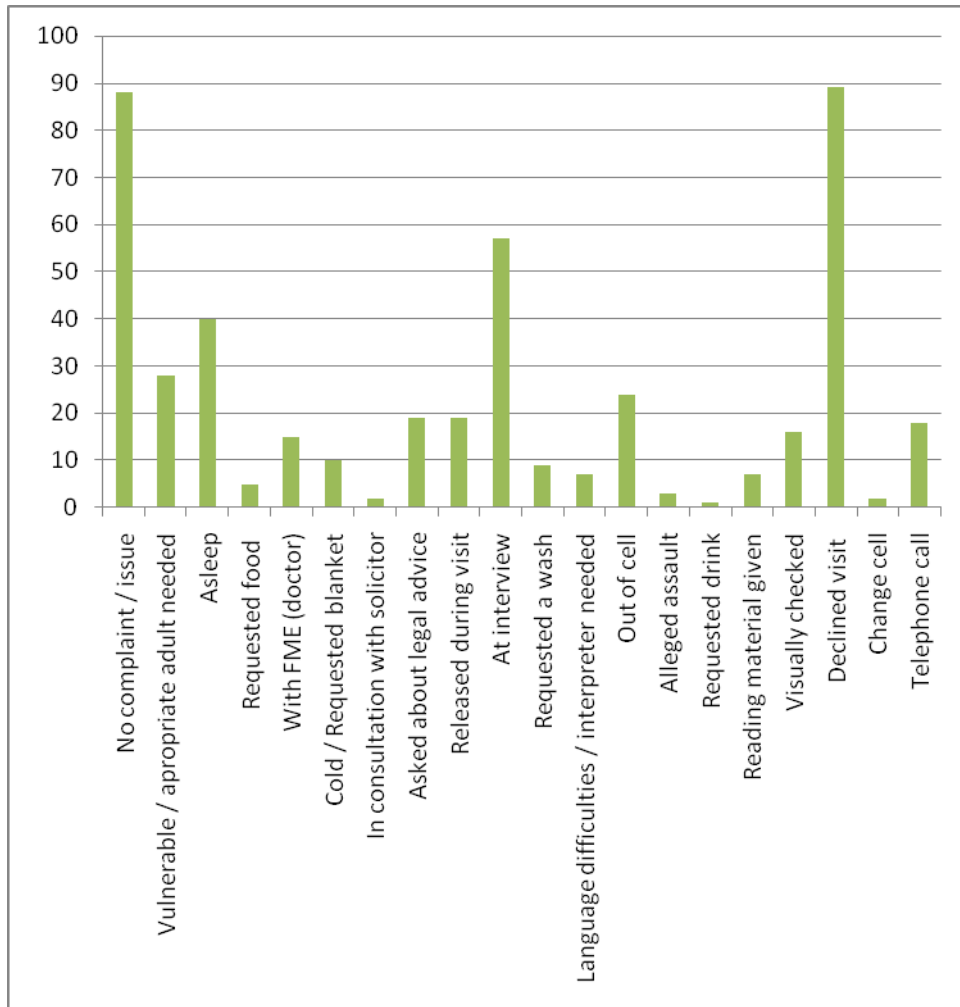
Visits by day and time period

Independent custody visits are unannounced and the panel's intention is to avoid visiting in a predictable pattern.



Detainee Concerns

The chart below shows a summary of concerns raised by detainees during visits made to Lambeth station in 2008.



Targets and Plans for 2009

1. To continue to ensure that the rights and interests of detainees are upheld.
2. To ensure each station receives 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 continue to monitor the provision of washes in all of custody suites
5. To endeavour to ensure regular attendance at panel meetings by all ICVs, or an apology beforehand if absence is unavoidable.
6. To work with the MPA on the recruitment of new members; to ensure that the membership increases and ideally reflects the community served by the Panel.
7. To ensure that new members undertake MPA initial training and that experienced members undertake refresher courses.
8. To increase Panel member input into the training of all custody staff.
9. To promote and raise awareness of the London ICV Scheme within Lambeth.
10. To continue to assist the MPA to fulfil its statutory responsibility to provide independent custody visiting in London.