



Devon & Cornwall Police Authority

Independent Custody Visiting Scheme

Annual Report 2008



Foreword

2008 was the 21st year of Independent Custody Visiting in Devon and Cornwall. Since the scheme began in 1987, volunteers have visited many thousands of detainees to check on their welfare whilst within police custody. Special credit must go to the volunteers who have carried out their role with consistent enthusiasm throughout the year.

In the early part of the year there was a change in responsibility for administration of the scheme within the Police Authority; as of February 2008 Rebecca Quance-Woodland took over as the central scheme administrator and therefore took on the day to day running of the scheme.

The number of Independent Custody Visitors decreased during the year due to retirements and withdrawal from the scheme. As a result, recruitment was undertaken during the early part of 2009.

A variety of training was provided during 2008. The opportunity to attend both diversity training and conflict management training was taken up by a number of our volunteers. We shall continue to provide training in these key areas so that all volunteers have an opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills in these areas.

A training day providing a general update on custody visiting issues took place in September 2008 and was offered to all of our Independent Custody Visitors. A representative from the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) delivered the training. The training consisted of any updates and legislative changes to custody visiting, as well as answering questions and issues identified by the Independent Custody Visitors. It was a successful day and we received positive feedback from those who were able to attend.

A number of our Independent Custody Visitors have spoken at Police Authority Liaison Meetings to promote and raise awareness of the scheme within our communities.

2008 has been a productive, ever-changing but ultimately successful year for custody visiting within Devon and Cornwall and our thanks goes to all our volunteers and our professional partners who are involved in the scheme.

Rebecca Quance-Woodland
Central Scheme Administrator
Devon & Cornwall Police Authority

Eleanor Tanner
Manager
Devon & Cornwall Police Authority

Introduction

"Independent Custody Visiting is the well established system whereby volunteers attend police stations to check on the treatment of detainees and the conditions in which they are held and that their rights and entitlements are being observed. It offers protections to both detainees and the police and reassurance to the community at large." (Home Office code of practice, 2003).

Who's Who In Independent Custody Visiting

- The Police Authority - consists of independent representatives, local councillors and lay justices. The responsibility for organising and overseeing the delivery of independent custody visiting lies with the Police Authority in consultation with the Chief Constable.
- The Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Administrators - overall responsibility for the central administration of the scheme is given to a nominated officer/s on the Police Authority's staff.
- Independent Custody Visitors - members of the community who have been selected through an interview and induction process to visit police stations. Visits are always undertaken in pairs. There are two panels of visitors – one for Devon and one for Cornwall. The Devon panel and the Cornwall panel each have their own panel co-ordinator.
- Panel Co-ordinators – Independent Custody Visitors with additional responsibility in relation to the scheme which includes producing the annual visiting roster, arranging and chairing panel meetings, raising issues arising from visits with the relevant police Inspector and identifying training needs.
- Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) – a national voluntary organisation which supports independent custody visiting nation-wide through training, advocacy and publicity.

Devon and Cornwall Local Panel Co-ordinators' reports.

Report of Mr Roy Sigsworth – Devon Independent Custody Visiting Panel

I feel that we have had a good twelve months and have come a long way in doing our custody visits. Our working relationship with custody staff has improved immensely, with custody stations offering us the opportunity to spend a shift with them, so we are able to see how they operate.

The new procedure for viewing custody records or custody log sheets have saved us a lot of time. It means custody visitors don't have to go through pages of paper to see the information that tells us whether the detainee has been read their rights etc.

Panel meetings during this year have been very interesting. We have been very lucky to have guest speakers attend including: Inspector Simon Weare who is the nominated Officer for Custody Visiting issues in Devon, Ed Wardle who is the Police Authority's Head of Audit and Richard Thompson from the UK Border Agency who gave a talk about immigration control in the area. We also had a refresher training day in both Cornwall and Devon which was led by a representative from the Independent Custody Visiting Association.

During the time that suspected terrorists were being held in custody, it became necessary to agree a procedure for custody visiting to be able to achieve a visit with the restrictions that were necessarily in place. It was discussed at to whether it would be appropriate for custody to be given the names of the

two custody visitors making a visit in advance so that security procedures could be simplified. This proved to be a successful way forward.

In November 2008, Gareth Rees and myself attended the National ICVA conference. It gave us the opportunity to listen to guest speakers and to meet other Independent Custody Visitors from across the country.

In January 2009 I met with my fellow panel co-ordinator Julie Downton, the Scheme Administrator, Becky Quance-Woodland, the Constabulary's Head of Custody Inspector Ivan Trethewey, and the two Police Officers with responsibility for custody visiting issues Inspector Simon Weare and Inspector Steve Lenney to discuss any matters raised throughout 2008. Of the issues raised all were responded to satisfactorily and we ensured that this feedback was given to all the custody visitors in a copy of their newsletter.

I would like to congratulate Mr Mike Murray in his new role as ICVA regional representative for the South West and I am sure we all wish Mike the best of luck.

Last of all I would like to thank everyone for their time and effort given to custody visiting.

Report of Mrs Julie Downton – Cornwall Independent Custody Visiting Panel

I feel our panel meetings over the year have given us a greater opportunity to share experiences and views, and have enabled us to influence changes within the custody environment where needed. I have personally found the panel meetings helpful. Your feedback, suggestions and opinions are fundamental to my role as panel co-ordinator.

In Cornwall we have agreed we would like to develop our panel meetings to ensure our time is being used most effectively and appropriately. Our panel believes it is essential we have both police and public confidence in our role and therefore feel it is important that the standard of custody visiting is raised. We might be volunteers, but the panel consider we have a duty to the public, the detainee and the police to make sure we are competent in our role.

We would like to include at least one training/update meeting per year along with one joint panel meeting to include an appropriate presentation. It was felt our remaining two meetings would benefit from a member of custody staff in attendance.

To enable us to carry out our role effectively, we all need to have the confidence to challenge and discuss issues with custody staff and with each other. The relationship between visitors, and between visitors and custody staff is first class and the mutual respect for each others roles allows discussion to take place.

We are pleased that significant progress has been made to improve the level of care for those persons detained with mental health needs.

We hope that Safeguard is over and done with and our custody suites will no longer be used in this way.

Unfortunately Devon and Cornwall has had to meet the face of terrorism head on and on several occasions, custody visitors have visited persons held under the Terrorism Act.

The level of care for all detainees in our part of the region is exceptionally good and custody staff on the whole are professional and courteous when conducting a custody visit.

I would like to thank all my colleagues for their support. I would like to thank Inspector Steve Lenney for his open approach in dealing with any issues raised.

I would like to say a special thank you to Becky for her enthusiasm and kindness. I have found her an absolute joy to work with and will miss her greatly when she moves on. On behalf of the Cornwall panel I would like to wish Becky all the very best for the future.

Visiting Roster

1. The following designated custody stations (units that conform to Home Office specifications for the detention of suspects and that are staffed 24 hours a day) were visited during the period:

Exeter	Newquay
Plymouth	Camborne
Barnstaple	Launceston
Torquay	

Throughout 2008, all designated custody units were programmed to receive between 3 and 4 custody visits per month, in line with national guidelines that recommend 1 visit a week.

2. The following non-designated custody units (units where detainees can be held if necessary but are not staffed or used on a daily basis) were visited during the period: -

Crownhill	Honiton
St Austell	Bodmin
Newton Abbot	Exmouth
Falmouth	Collumpton
Truro	

Some custody units had detainees in custody at the time of a visit. Checks were carried out on the empty custody units to make sure everything was in order should the cells be needed for detainees.

3. Exmouth Custody Centre was designated from March 2008 to December 2008 and extra visits were arranged for as many weekends as possible during this period.
4. 2008 saw fewer implementations of Operation Safeguard in Devon and Cornwall and therefore there were fewer Safeguard prisoners in our cells. Operation Safeguard is a contingency plan to deal with prison overcrowding in the United Kingdom; it involves using cells at police stations as accommodation for prisoners when the number of cells in prisons becomes critically low. The reason for the reduced need for cells for operation safeguard during 2008 is not known.

Appendix A shows the frequency of visits to police stations during the period.

Main issues arising from visits

5. A variety of issues raised during discussions with detainees were addressed with the relevant police personnel at the time of the visit. These included requests for:-
 - Beverages and hot food.
 - Phone calls.
 - Showers and washing facilities.
 - Medical attention.
 - Solicitors.
 - Clean bedding.
 - Exercise and fresh air.
 - Blankets and warm clothing.
 - Legal advice.

6. Many positive comments were received from Independent Custody Visitors undertaking visits during the year and these included: -
 - Visits to Exeter generally receive positive comments. Excellent approach to detainees observed as well as being helpful and friendly.
 - After a visit to Torquay custody suite in September 2008 one Independent Custody Visitor felt compelled to write a letter of praise with regards to the attitudes of the police officers that assisted the visit.
 - Comments on the excellent condition of the majority of custody suites were received.
 - Custody suites are getting a lot of positive feedback with regards to the cleanliness of the units.
 - Generally, Independent Custody Visitors feel well received at custody centers, even when Officers were busy and under pressure.

Issues relating to the conditions in which detainees were held included:-

- It was mentioned several times that it was very hot in Charles Cross. When this was mentioned to the escorting officer it was explained that when the building was made the hot and cold pipes ran alongside each other parallel and touched slightly. This means that the cold pipe gets warm therefore making the station and cells fairly hot.
 - Unclean areas, one report highlighted that Crownhill custody area could do with a clean. The custody Inspector was spoken to regarding this, and the cleanliness had improved for the following visit.
 - One of the cells at Barnstaple custody suite had a faulty intercom system. A repair was undertaken.
 - In August, there were complaints of a strong smell of sewage in the custody area. Maintenance had this checked.
7. Compared to 2007, the number of complaints regarding the provision of food has drastically decreased. There is a wide range of food that can now be supplied to detainees to cater for different dietary requirements.

Appendix B shows a summary of the number of visits made and types of issues raised for each designated custody unit separately, and an overall summary which includes non-designated custody units.

8. As a result of custody visits and concerns raised, actions taken include:
- One detainee complained that his wrists were hurting, it was clear that he had slight visible bruising. Independent Custody Visitors requested that the detainee should see a Health Care Professional. This was organised by the officer and the detainee's injuries were recorded.
 - A detainee requested that they would like a drink and to see a doctor, Independent Custody Visitors reported this back to the officer and a drink was provided and a visit from the Health Care Professional was arranged.
 - A vegetarian meal was requested and this was arranged.
 - Fresh air and a phone call to the detainee's wife were requested. The detainee was taken out to the exercise yard and a message was left with his wife.
 - A blanket was requested and supplied due to a detainee complaining of being cold.

Noteworthy items

9. The Scheme Administrator attended the Independent Custody Visiting Association conference for administrators in Manchester. It gave an opportunity to meet and share ideas about the scheme with other Authorities from across the country and also provided useful information for the recruitment and retention of volunteers.
10. In May 2008 a suspected terrorist was held in custody after the Exeter bombings. In order to be able to carry out a custody visit in light of significant security issues, it was necessary to agree a mutually acceptable visiting protocol with the police. In essence a visit proceeds in much the same way as a regular custody visit however there is a need for custody visitors to undergo a search and remove any items that could be used as a weapon by the detainee. Questions are agreed in advance and not deviated from during the visit; the visitors cannot enter into general conversation. This ensures that the suspect cannot extract any information from the visitors. Finally, the visit report is left in the police station for forwarding to the police authority, rather than being taken away by the custody visitor.
11. During 2008, a number of Independent Custody Visitors spent a shift in a custody suite in order to get a clearer understanding of the processes involved in the detaining of people, and the sort of challenges often faced by the police in this environment. This initiative has been very well received, and all those who took advantage of this arrangement found it very useful and relevant to their role.
12. During 2008 changes were made to the way in which custody visitors view the custody log. In previous years custody visitors were given a print out of the custody record. It was decided that it would be more appropriate for custody visitors to view the custody log (instead of record) on the computer screen in the fingerprint room as the computer used allows information to be seen clearly. Seeing this information on the computer is saving both custody visitors and custody staff significant time because it is quicker to produce and easier to locate the relevant information.
13. In October 2008 a joint Devon and Cornwall panel meeting was held. Richard Thompson from the UK Border Control attended this meeting to give a talk on Immigration in the South West area. The talk was very informative and created a great deal of discussion.
14. Two Independent Custody Visitors, Roy Sigsworth and Gareth Rees, attended the Independent Custody Visiting Association conference in Stratford Upon Avon in November. As well as meeting other Independent Custody Visitors, police officers and police authority members, the conference

provided an opportunity for delegates to listen to keynote speakers and also to network with other Independent Custody Visitors from across the country.

15. The Police Authority continued to deliver independent custody visiting training to incoming custody staff. The training aimed to provide an overview of what the scheme is about and the role of the custody staff in facilitating a visit. A comprehensive reference file has been developed for the custody staff receiving training to make use of throughout their posting.
16. At the end of 2008, the Independent Custody Visiting Association requested a regional representative to sit on their Executive Committee. Two volunteers from the Devon and Cornwall scheme put their names forward for consideration. Mike Murray was successful in his application to represent the South West region on the Committee. The role includes attending the ICVA Executive Committee and AGM and bringing to the attention of police authority scheme administrators or the police service in Devon & Cornwall, Avon & Somerset, Wiltshire, Dorset and Gloucestershire any issues relevant to independent custody visiting.

Outstanding issues / trends

17. The custody visiting guidelines recommend a meeting between the central scheme administrator and the Chief Inspector of Custody once or twice a year to consider any outstanding issues as a result of custody visits. This meeting took place in January 2009 and a number of issues were discussed which included:
 - Staffing at custody units
Concerns were raised over the levels of staff working within Camborne custody. It was mentioned that Camborne had recently gained 2 extra sergeants and 2 detention officers, however staffing levels are constantly being looking into.
 - Wearing of ID badges in custody
It was raised that for safety reasons all independent custody visitors must take off their badge and neckband whilst within a cell.
 - Cell buzzers
It had been noticed that on some occasions the custody log did not show that cell buzzers had been tested before detainees were placed in a cell. Upon raising this issue it was clarified that checking cell buzzers has become part of the performance management review (PMR) process for custody staff. Custody visitors have also made checking buzzers a part of their visit.
 - Highlight lines on floors
It had been noticed that at certain stations there were highlighted lines on the floors for firefighters to find their way around the custody units. It was asked why not all stations had this utility as custody visitors felt it was a health and safety issue. The decision to implement these lines is down to the local fire brigade, some felt that they were more useful than others.
 - Cell heating and air circulation
This is an ongoing problem and unfortunately there is nothing that can be done to resolve it. This is because the heating for all custody units is powered from Middlemoor, so whichever setting they choose to have there will have the same affect upon all custody units across Devon and Cornwall.

Recruitment and Selection during 2008

18. No new volunteers were recruited to the scheme during 2008.

Retirements

19. During 2008, 6 people left the scheme for the following reasons:

Reason	Number
Clash of Roles	4
Illness/ Health Concerns	1

A breakdown of the age, gender and ethnicity of Independent Custody Visitors as at 31 December 2008 year is attached at Appendix C.

Visit Performance Frequency of visits to police stations

(Designated custody units are marked with the symbol **◆**.
All other stations have non-designated police cells.)

◆ Three / Four visits per month

■ Twice yearly visit

Station	Target number of visits per year	Actual number of visits per year	Performance as a percentage of visits undertaken against required number of visits	
			2007 (%)	2008 (%)
◆ Barnstaple	42	39	92	93
◆ Exeter	42	41	94	98
◆ Plymouth	42	38	90	90
◆ Newquay	42	36	94	86
◆ Camborne	42	36	92	86
◆ Torquay	42	39	85	93
◆ Launceston	42	36	92	86
■ Honiton	2	1	100	50
■ Bodmin	2	1	50	50
■ Exmouth	17	11	150	65
■ Falmouth	2	2	100	100
■ Newton Abbot	2	1	100	50
■ St Austell	2	2	50	100
■ Collumpton	2	1	50	50
■ Crownhill	2	2	150	100
■ Truro	2	1	0	50
TOTAL	328	287	90%	88%

Exmouth was designated and open for custody during the following dates:

Friday 21st March – Monday 24th March
 Friday 2nd May – Monday 5th May
 Friday 23rd May – Monday 26th May
 Friday 25th July – Sunday 27th July
 Friday 1st August – Sunday 3rd August
 Friday 8th August – Sunday 10th August
 Friday 15th August – Sunday 25th August
 Friday 29th August – Sunday 31st August
 Friday 5th September – Sunday 7th September
 Friday 21st October – Sunday 2nd November
 Friday 12th December – Sunday 14th December
 Friday 19th December – Sunday 21st December
 Wednesday 24th December – Thursday 25th December
 Wednesday 31st December – Thursday 1st January

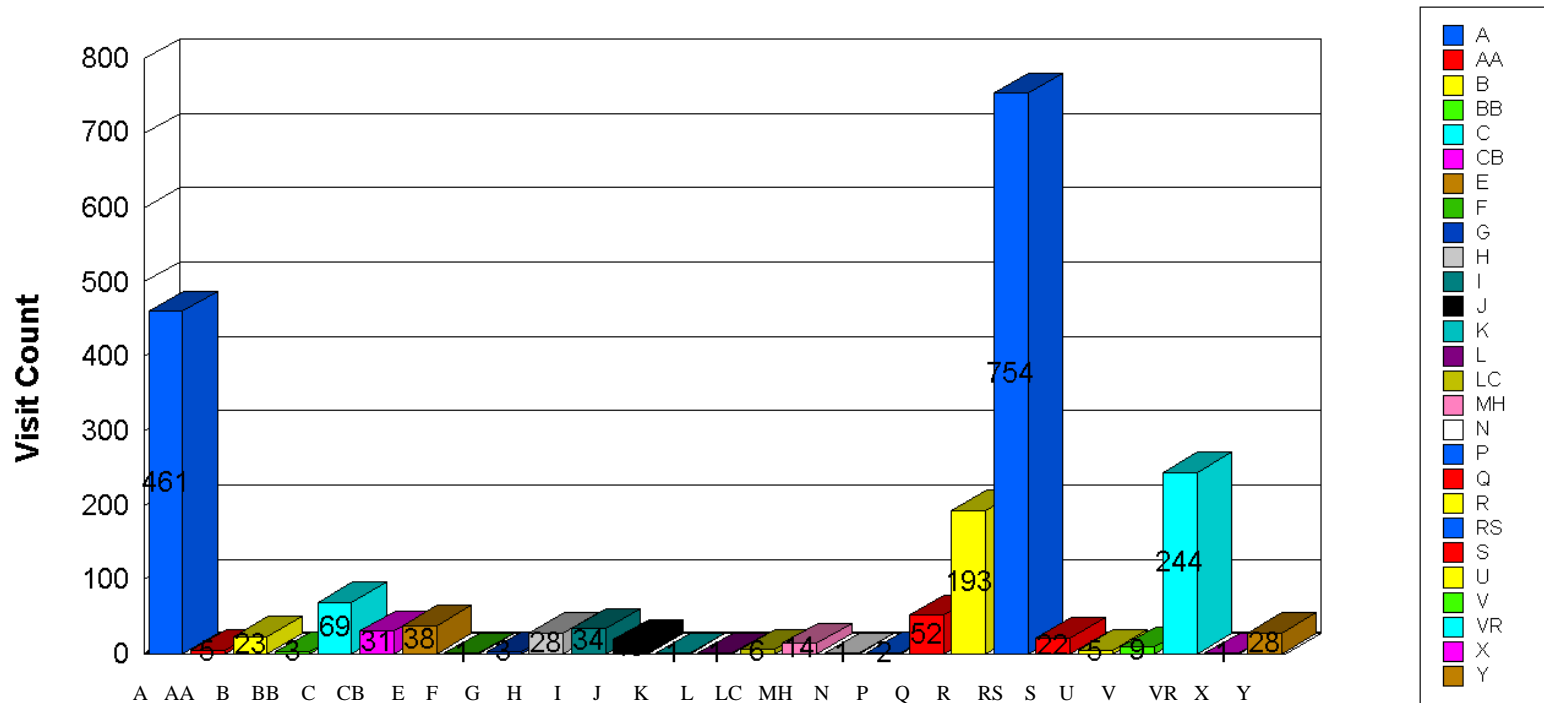
Visit Performance
Accepted visits compared with number of visits offered

Station	Number of detainees in custody at time of visits	Number of detainees offered visit	Number of accepted visits *	% of detainees seen against number of visits offered
Barnstaple	135	98	70	71
Exeter	326	190	124	65
Plymouth	449	222	153	70
Newquay	99	73	49	67
Camborne	149	110	77	70
Torquay	320	204	142	70
Launceston	133	98	75	77
TOTAL	1611	995	690	69%

Appendix B

Summary of Concerns Raised during visits
(designated and non-designated visits)

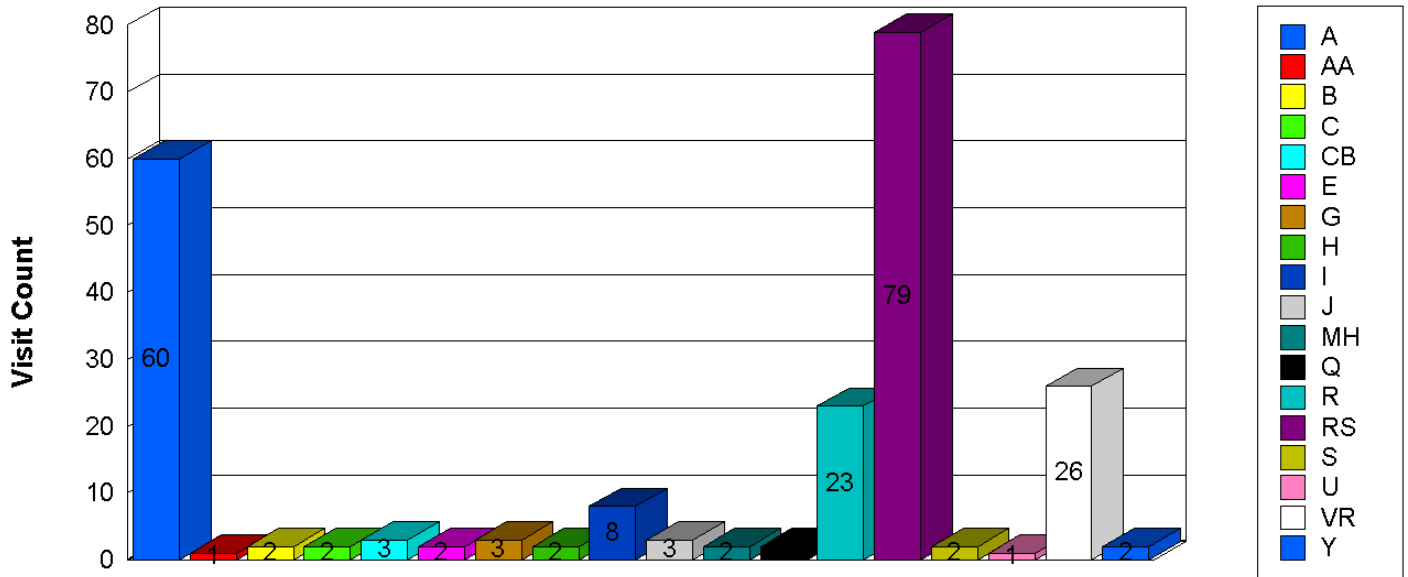
(Period 01/01/2008 to 31/12/2008)



A No complaints, **AB** Alarm bell not answered, **AN** Noise, **B** Request food, **BB** Poor food, **C** Medical attention, **CB** Blanket, **D** Cigarettes, **E** Legal advice, **F** Bail, **H** Relative informed of detention, **HR** Human rights issue, **I** Visit from relative / Friend, **J** Washing facilities, **K** Dirty cell, **L** Too hot, **LC** Too cold, **M** Ventilation, **MH** Detained under mental health section, **N** Clean clothing, **O** Clean bedding, **P** Alleged assault, **Q** Request drink, **R** Detainee unavailable, **RS** Custody record seen, **S** Exercise, **T** Lost property, **U** Toilet facilities, **V** Reading material, **VR** Visit refused, **W** Change cell, **X** Interpreted, **Y** Telephone call, **Z** Complaint general.

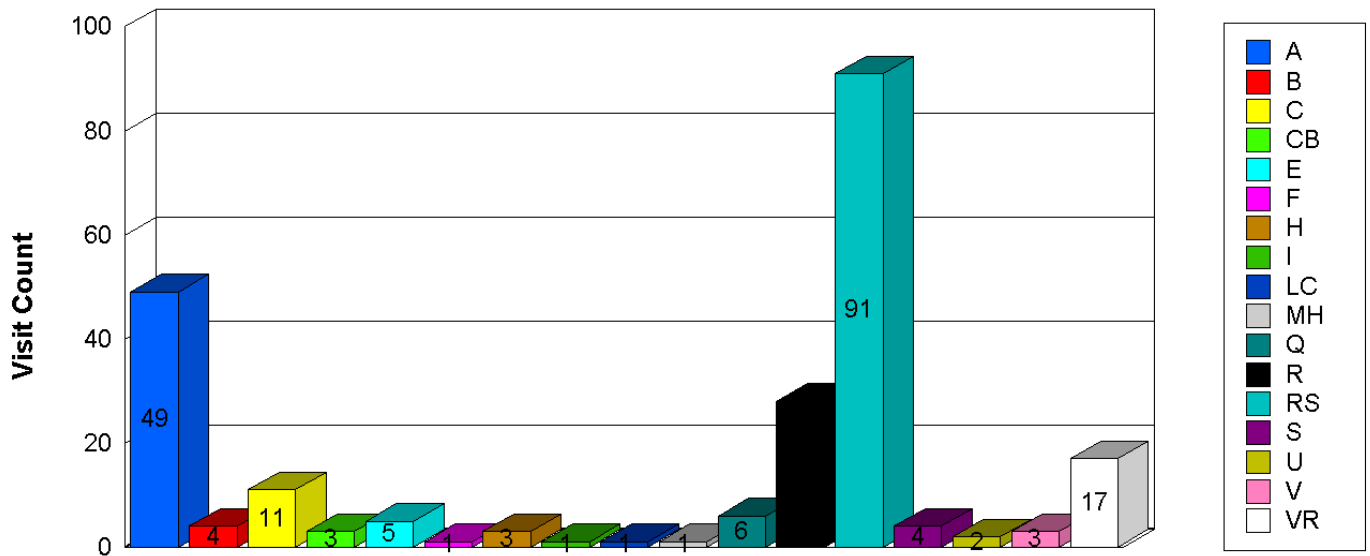
Summary of Concerns Raised during visits at Camborne

(Period 01/01/2008 to 31/12/2008)

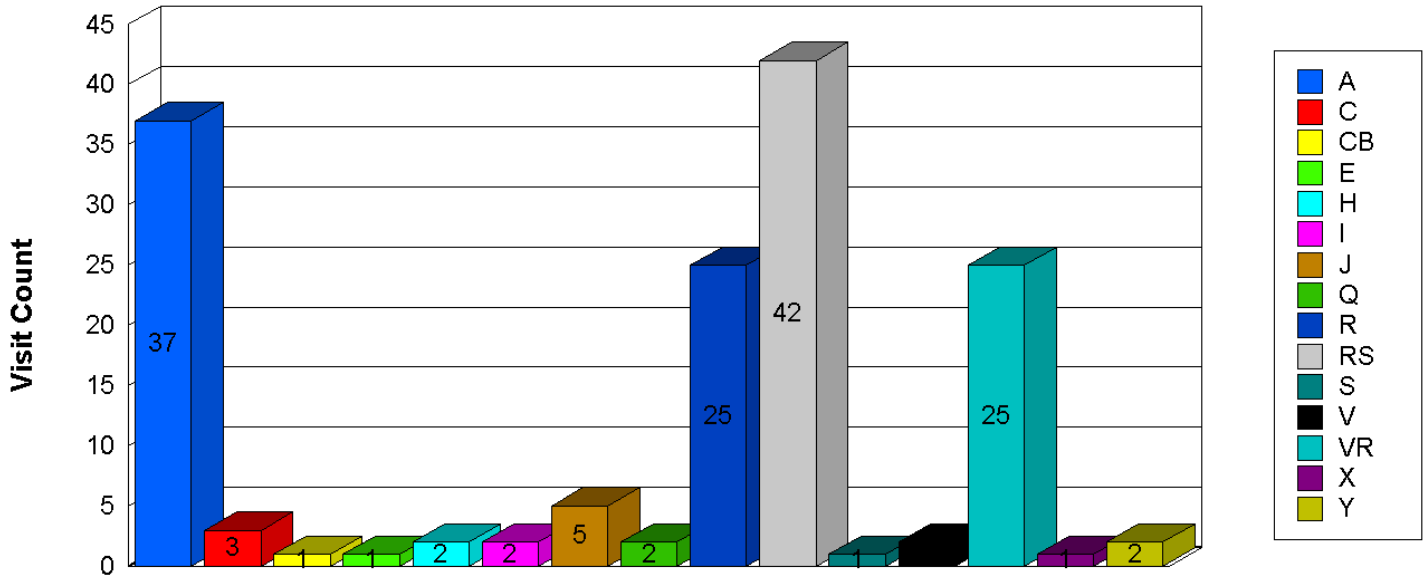


Summary of Concerns Raised during visits at Launceston

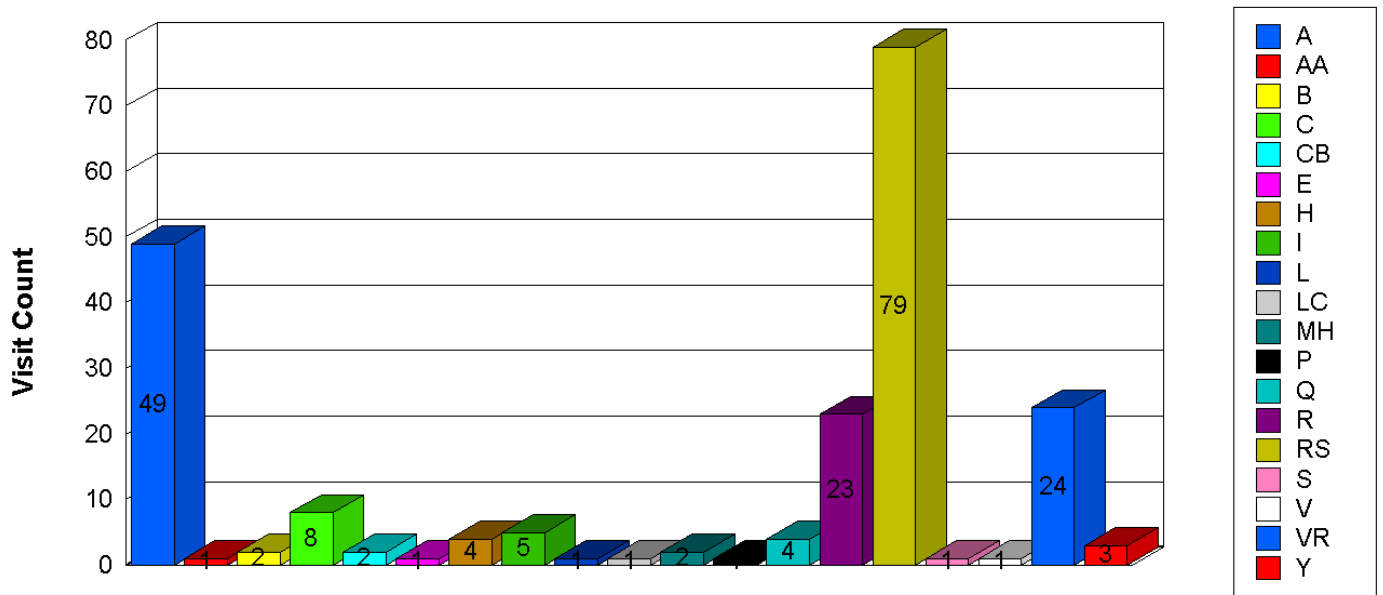
(Period 01/01/2008 to 31/12/2008)



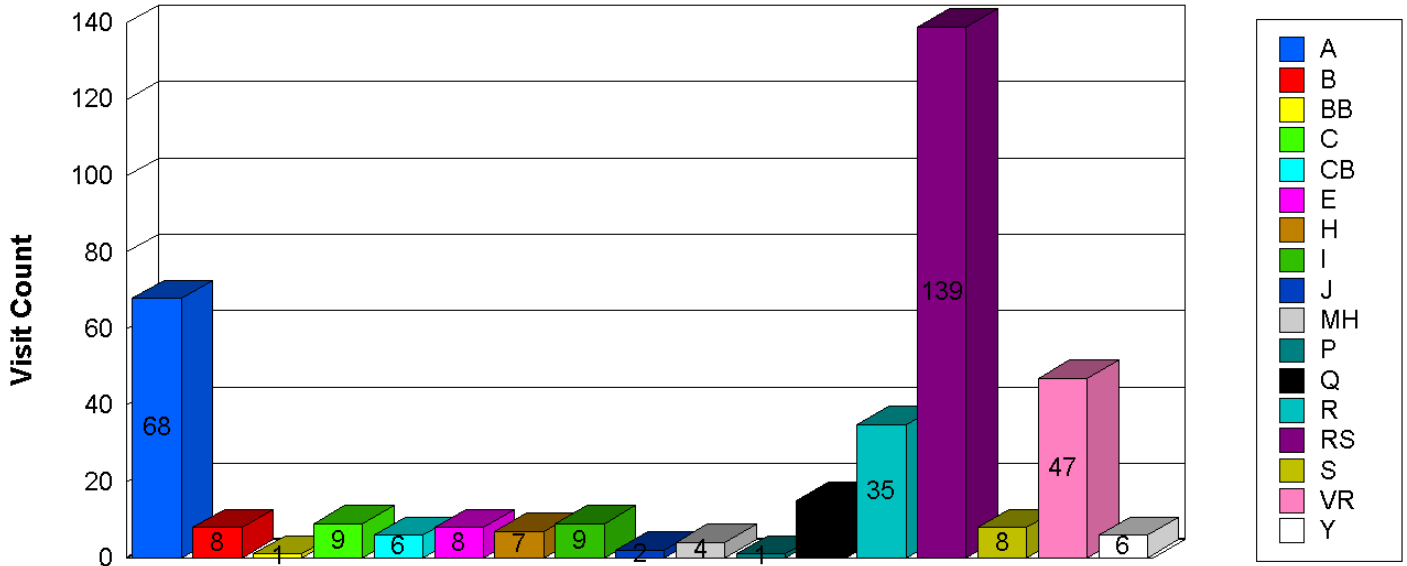
Summary of Concerns Raised during visits at Newquay
(Period 01/01/2008 to 31/12/2008)



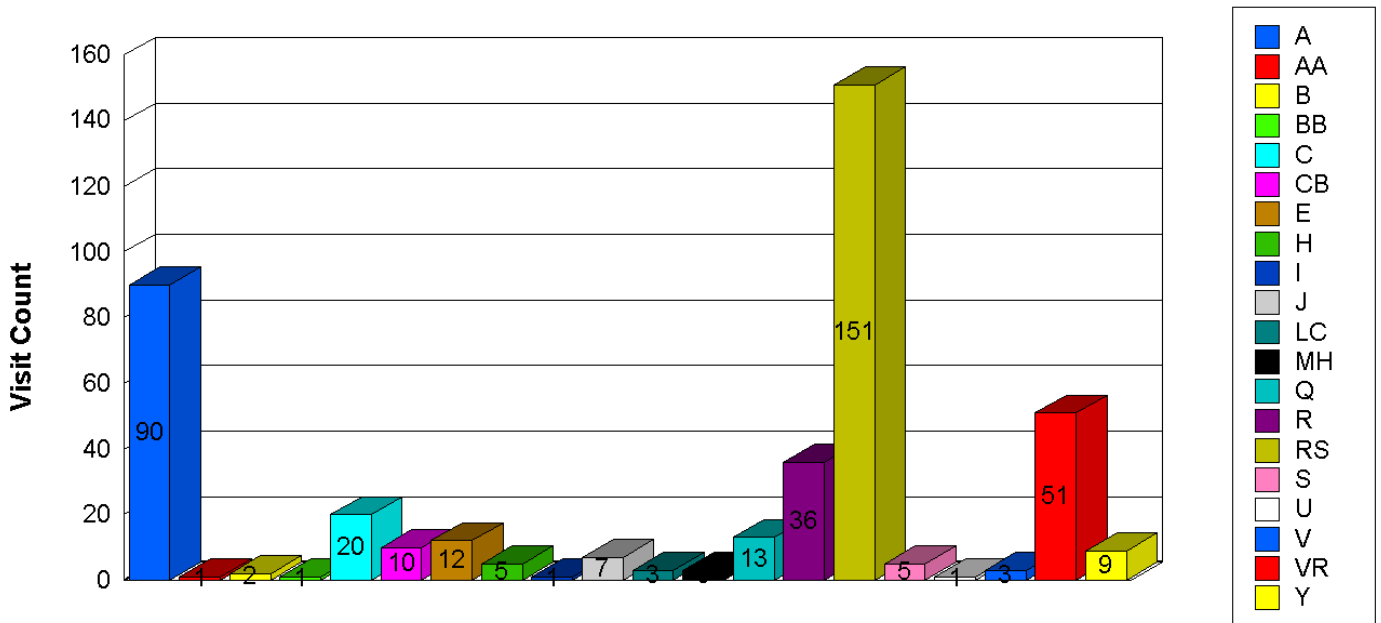
Summary of Concerns Raised during visits at Barnstaple
(Period 01/01/2008 to 31/12/2008)



Summary of Concerns Raised during visits at Exeter
(Period 01/01/2008 to 31/12/2008)

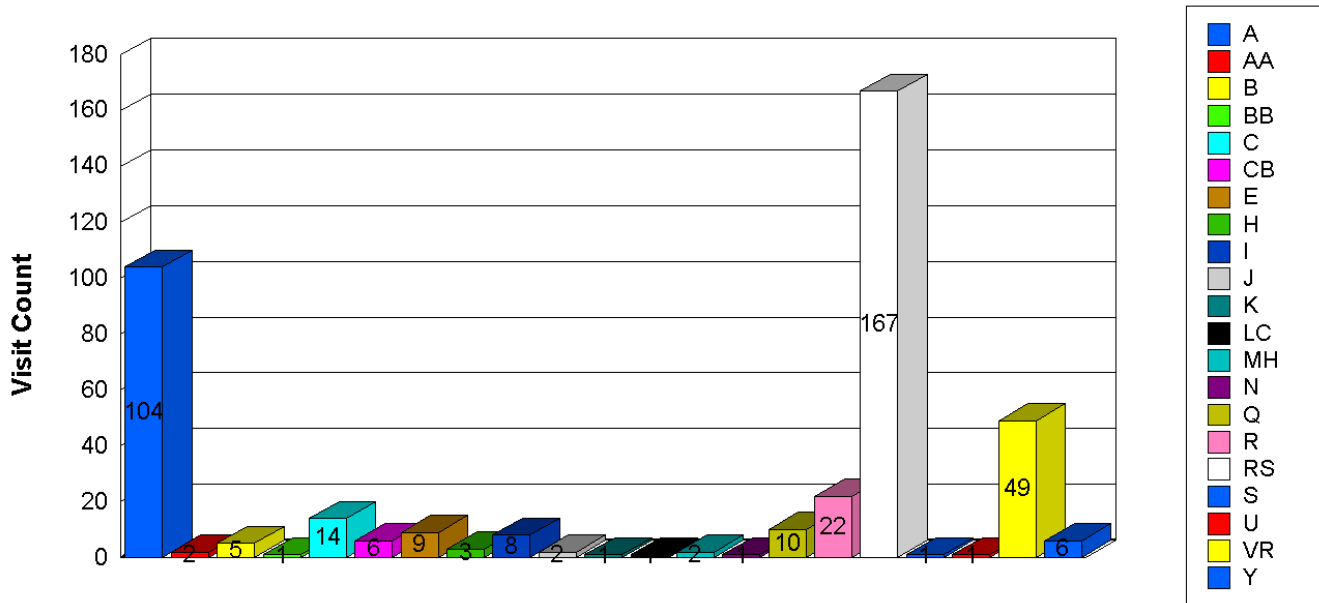


Summary of Concerns Raised during visits at Plymouth Charles Cross
(Period 01/01/2008 to 31/12/2008)



Summary of Concerns Raised during visits at Torquay

(Period 01/01/2008 to 31/12/2008)

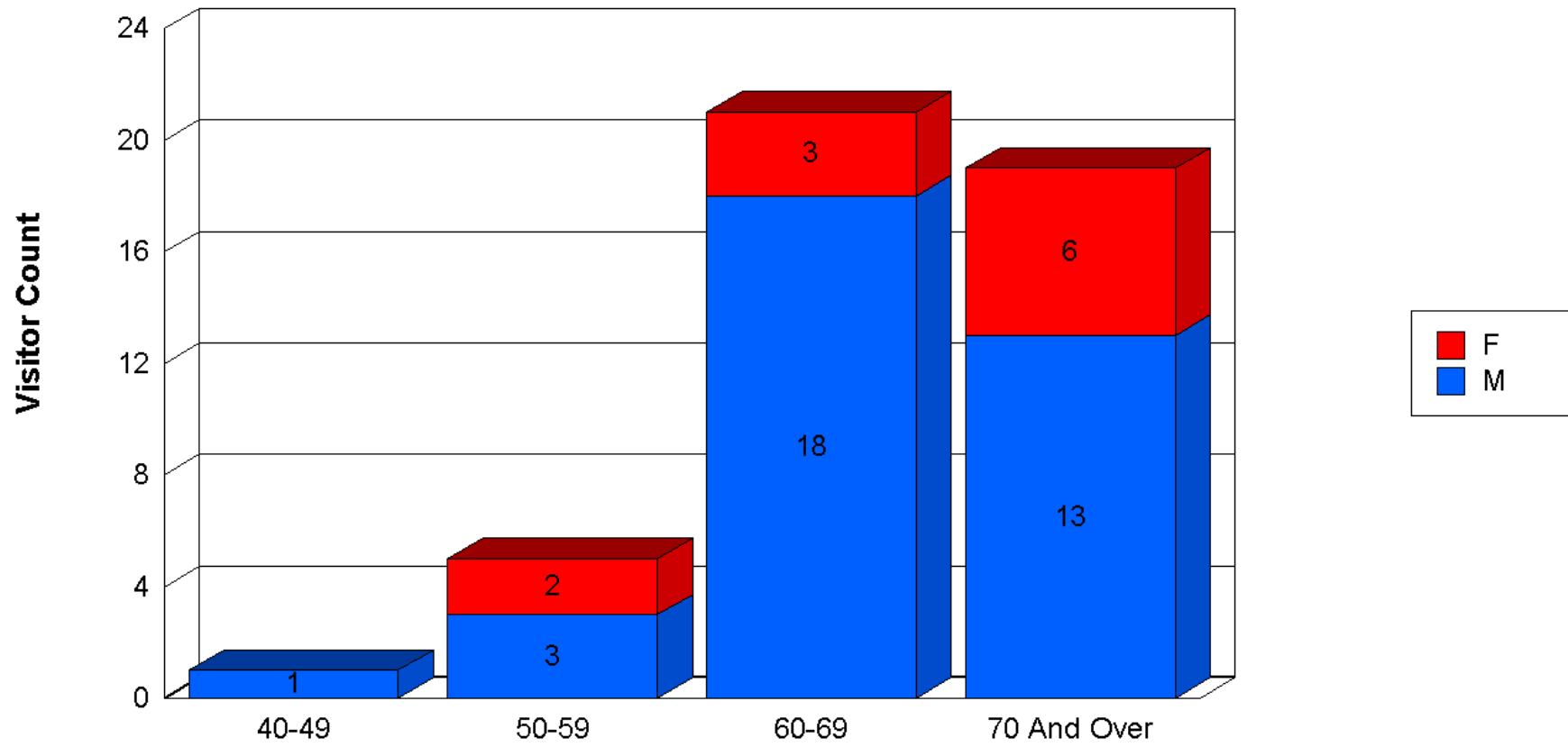


Summary of concerns raised for DCPA

ID Categories

A	No complaints	M	Ventilation
AB	Alarm bell not answered	MH	Detained under mental health section
AN	Noise	N	Clean clothing
B	Request food	O	Clean bedding
BB	Poor food	P	Alleged assault
C	Medical attention	Q	Request drink
CB	Blanket	R	Detainee unavailable
D	Cigarettes	RS	Custody record seen
E	Legal advice	S	Exercise
F	Bail	T	Lost property
H	Relative informed of detention	U	Toilet facilities
HR	Human rights issue	V	Reading material
I	Visit from relative / Friend	VR	Visit refused
J	Washing facilities	W	Change cell
K	Dirty cell	X	Interpreted
L	Too hot	Y	Telephone call
LC	Too cold		

Age Range & Gender Of Custody Visitors For DCPA



Ethnicity Of Custody Visitors For DCPA

