

Devon and Cornwall Police Authority  
13<sup>th</sup> February 2009  
Open for the purposes of FOI  
Report of the Chief Executive

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## INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING BI-ANNUAL REPORT

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Authority notes the content of the Report.

### Introduction / Summary

1. This report summarises the output from independent custody visiting for the period 1 July to the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2008.

### Background information

2. "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).

### Numbers of detainees seen

3. Designated custody units - the following designated custody units were visited during the period:

Barnstaple  
Plymouth  
Torquay

Exeter  
Launceston

Newquay  
Camborne

4. Records indicate that 125 of the programmed 147 visits were undertaken during the period 1 July to 30 December 2008, during which there were 809 detainees held in custody. Of these, 513 were offered a visit and 360 were seen (70%). The highest percentage of detainees seen was at Launceston Custody Centre (76%).
5. Non-designated custody units - the following non-designated custody units were visited during the period:

Cullompton  
Honiton  
Exmouth

Crown Hill  
Falmouth

St Austell  
Truro

### Main issues arising from visits

6. A variety of issues arising during discussions with detainees were raised and addressed with the relevant police personnel at the time of the visit. These included requests for:-
- Beverages and food, phone calls, blankets, requests for medical attention, washing facilities, exercise etc.

Many positive comments were received from Independent Custody Visitors undertaking visits during the period of July to December 2009 and these included: -

- After a visit to Torquay Police Station, one custody visitor felt compelled to write to the Police Authority in praise of the attitude of all of the officers met during the visit.
- Numerous reports have been received regarding the cleanliness of Launceston and Torquay custody centres.

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

- Camborne custody is reported to be low on staff. Only one detention officer and one sergeant were available upon one visit. This matter has now been addressed and extra officers have been put in post.
- Concerns regarding mental health detainees have been raised throughout the six-months. Specific issues have been responded to as quickly as possible. There are general concerns that police cells are being used as a place of safety for people with mental health issues. Changes are due to be and from April 2009, custody units will start to refuse entry of people with mental health issues, who would otherwise only be detained to provide a place of safety.

Appendix A 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.

### **Panel Meetings**

In October we held a joint panel meeting with both Devon and Cornwall custody visitors. At this meeting Richard Thompson gave a talk regarding Government Policy on Immigration. This appeared to be a good experience for custody visitors and has given us a view of the future training that would be beneficial to ICVs.

### **Refresher Training**

In September we held two days of refresher training for all ICVs to attend. The training was provided by ICVA (Independent Custody Visiting Association). The training covered areas such as:

- Detention times
- PACE Code C

The training was interactive and feedback from ICVs was very positive.

### **Annual Meeting with Chief Inspector of Custody**

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.

A meeting was held on 8 January 2009 and was attended by the two panel co-ordinators and the scheme administrator. A number of issues were raised and discussed, including;

- Nurses or doctors not being available – long waiting periods – This is a corporate issue across the force and something that is reviewed monthly. There are nurses at some units but not all. It is something that needs reviewing again and more funding would be useful. Launceston seems to be the main problem area in terms of nursing support due to its geographical location.
- Cells being used for storage  
It was agreed that designated station cells should never be used for storage however non-designated may be used if required.

### **Recruitment of Independent Custody Visitors**

There was no recruitment of Independent Custody Visitors between 1<sup>st</sup> July to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2008 however recruitment advertising will begin in January 2009.

### **Independent Custody Visitor Representation**

11. Appendix B shows a breakdown of the ethnicity, age and gender of Independent Custody Visitors involved in the Devon and Cornwall scheme as at January 2009.

Contact: for further information:

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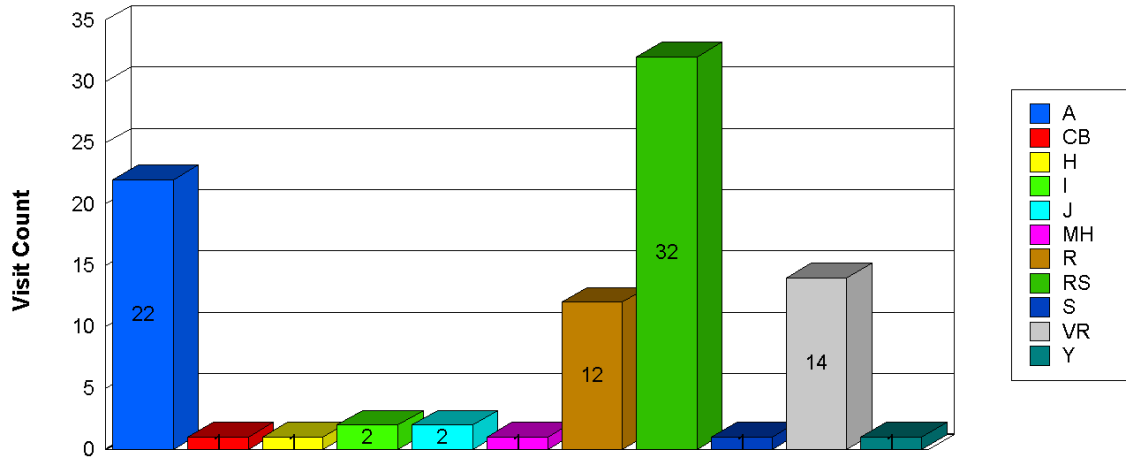
Email: [rebecca.quance-woodland@devonandcornwall.pnn.police.uk](mailto:rebecca.quance-woodland@devonandcornwall.pnn.police.uk)

Number of concerns raised for DCPA

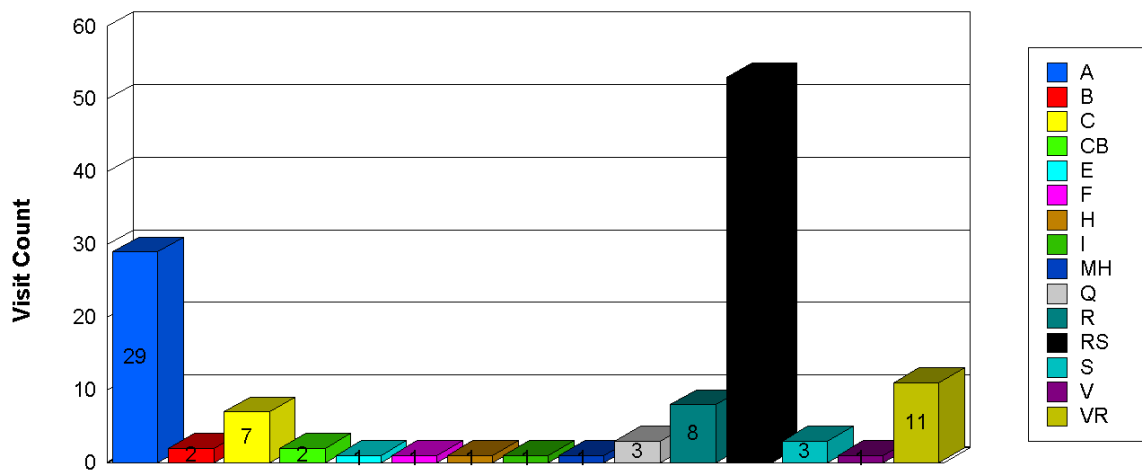
ID Categories

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

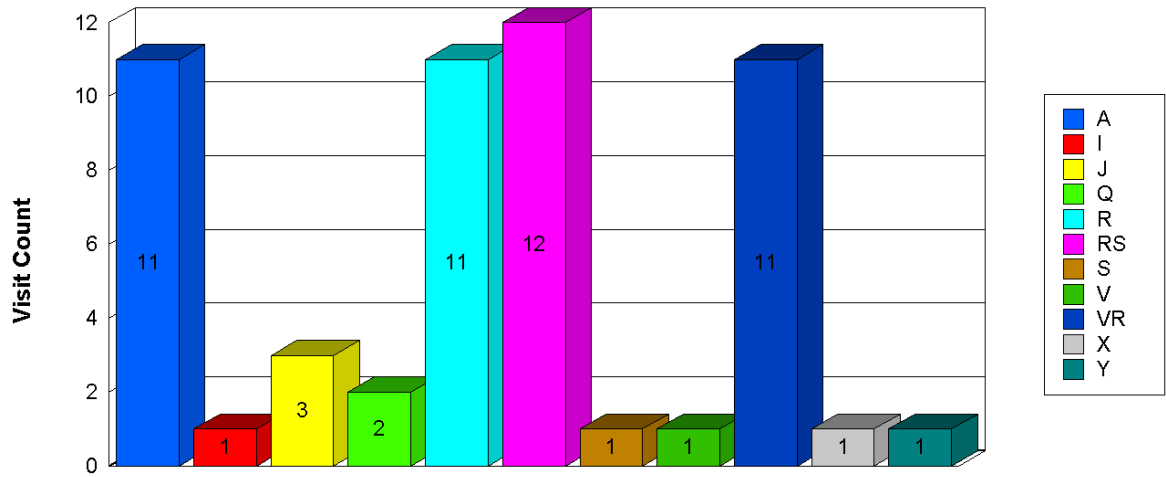
Camborne



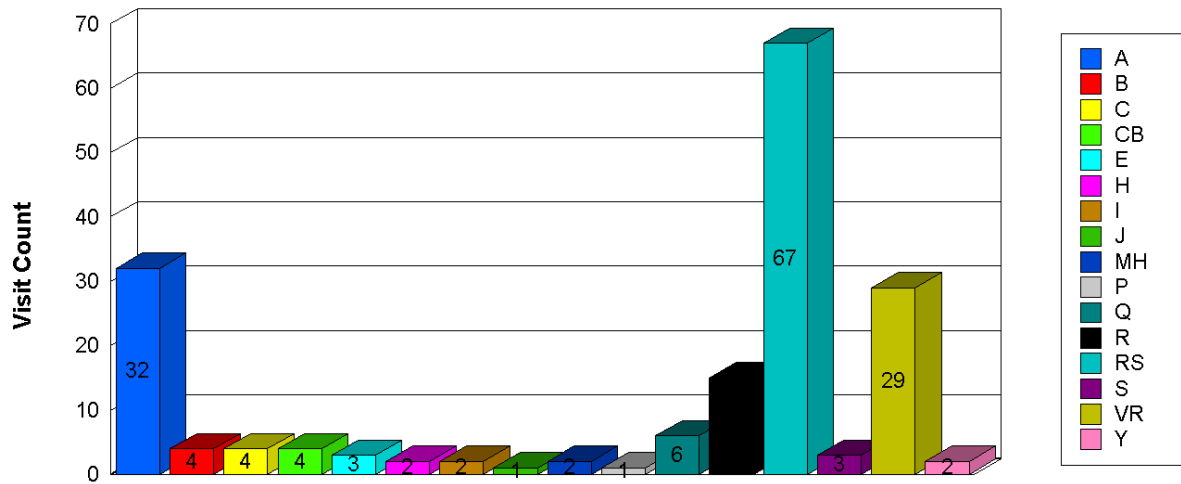
Launceston



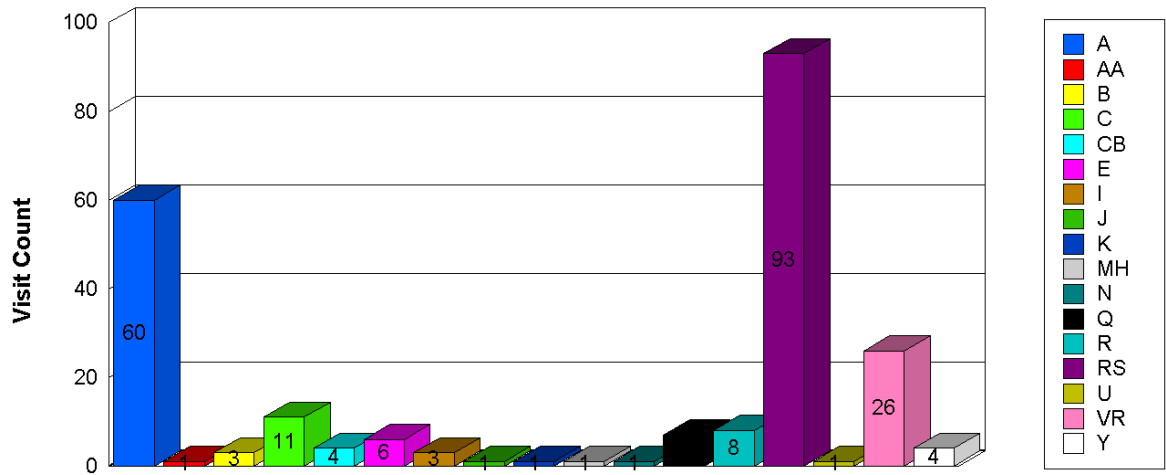
Newquay



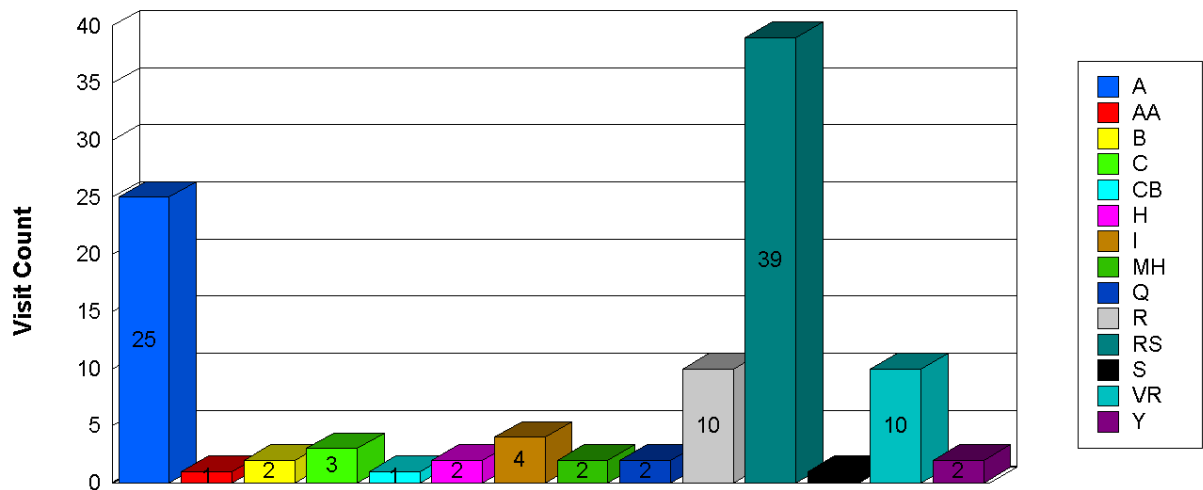
Exeter



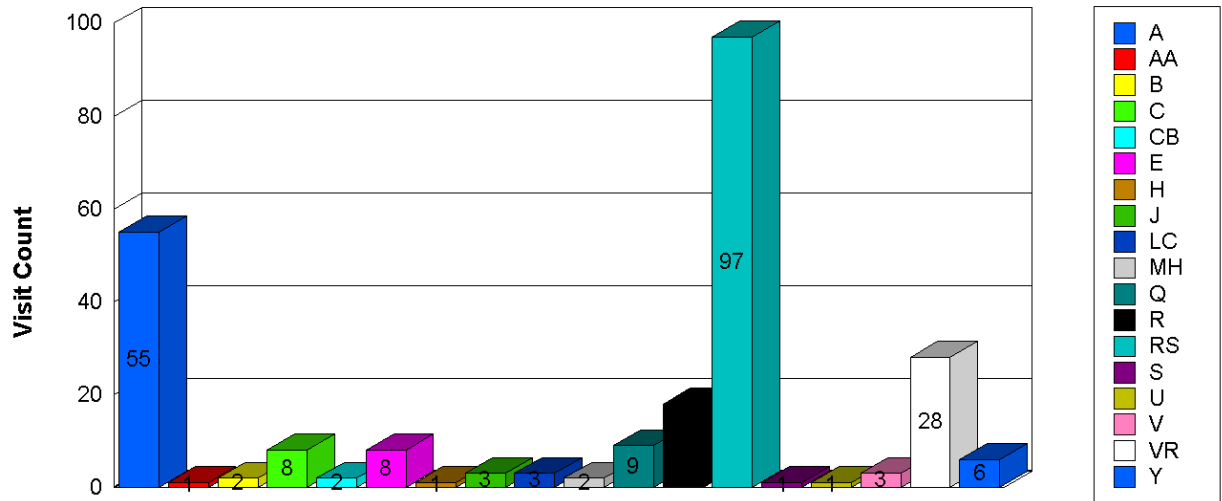
Torquay



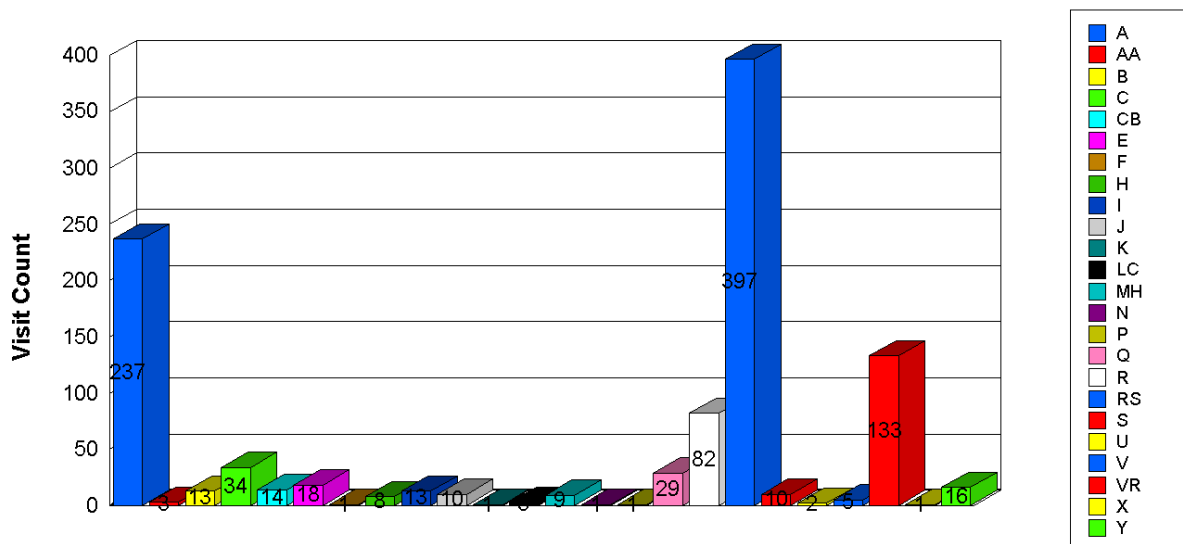
Barnstaple



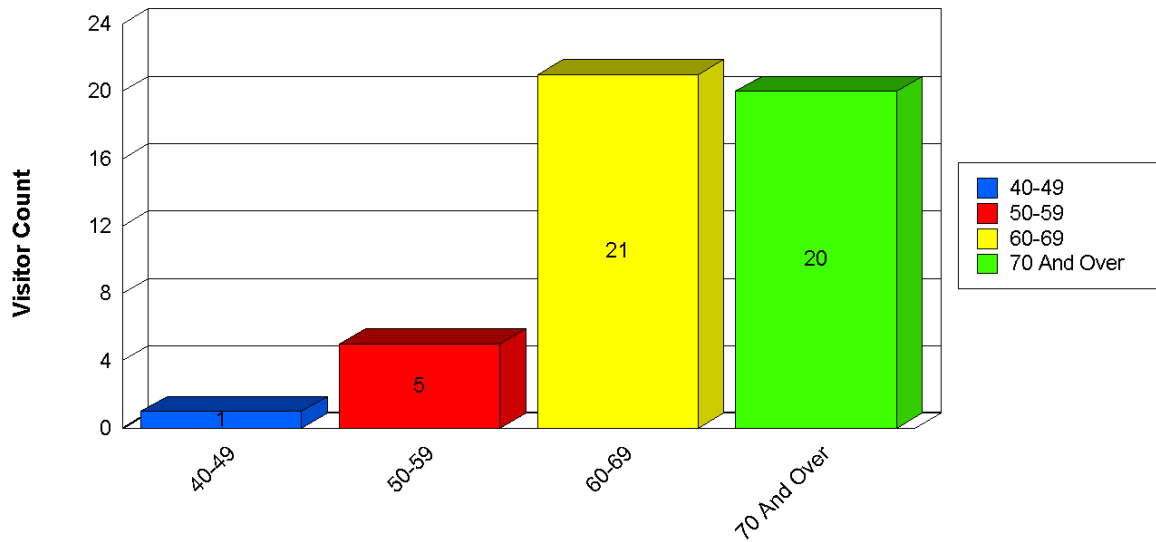
Charles Cross



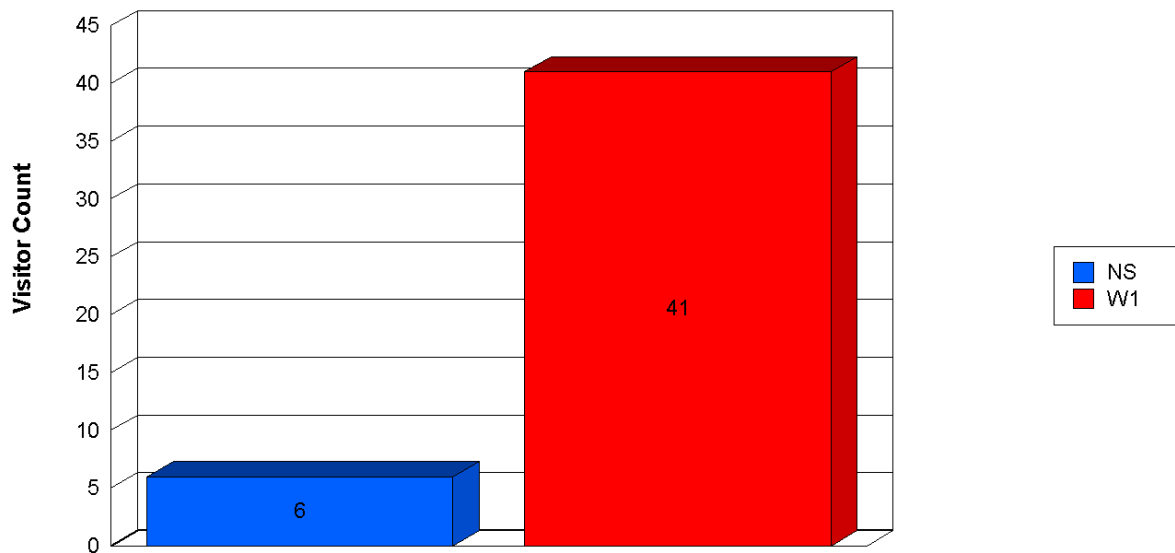
Overall visit statistics



Age Range of Independent Custody Visitors in Devon and Cornwall



Ethnicity of Independent Custody Visitors in Devon and Cornwall



### Gender of Independent Custody Visitors in Devon and Cornwall

