



Independent Custody Visiting Scheme

Annual Report

2016-2017

1. INTRODUCTION

The Independent Custody Visiting Scheme uses volunteers from the local community to observe, comment and report on the conditions under which people are detained in police custody. The Scheme provides an independent check on the operation of statutory and other rules governing the welfare of people in custody and helps to promote greater understanding and confidence in this process.

The Police and Crime Commissioner has a statutory duty under Section 51 of the Police Reform Act 2002 to make arrangements for detainees to be visited by independent custody visitors, to keep these arrangements under review, and revise them as required.

2. KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN 2016/17

Closure of Yeovil Custody Unit

On 2nd April 2017, the Yeovil custody unit closed its cell doors for the last time. After careful consideration and recommendations from the HMIC/P joint inspection report it was agreed that the custody facilities were no longer fit for purpose, nor were they a financially viable option to repair or replace given that the numbers of detainees taken to Yeovil has been steadily decreasing over recent years. The last visit was conducted on 20th March 2017; the ICVs from the Yeovil panel were thanked for their commitment to visiting until the very end as well as their support to the Patchway panel when they were short of ICVs in a personal written letter from Police and Crime Commissioner, Sue. All the ICVs from Yeovil were offered the opportunity to visit at Bridgwater, but given that many lived very locally to Yeovil, no-one took this opportunity and instead sought more local volunteering opportunities.

A new style of introduction

Almost every other ICV scheme in the country uses the self-introduction method of introducing themselves, which involves the escorting officer checking the cell and then opening the cell door to let the ICVs in to introduce themselves and ascertain consent for the visit. At the end of the last financial year, the Bridgwater panel had trialled introducing themselves for quarters 3 and 4. Quarter 2 of this year saw the trial expand to all panels, with an anonymous survey at the start of quarter 3 to gather the views of the ICVs following the trial to ensure any decision made was well informed, democratic and fair. An overwhelming 99% of those that took part in the survey were in favour of self-introduction and so it was introduced with immediate effect. One ICV felt so strongly against using self-introduction that they didn't take part in the trial, and subsequently resigned as an ICV when the decision was made to adopt this way of introduction.

HMIC/P Joint Inspection of Custody

Quarter 2 saw the ICVs asking custody staff two HMIC/P inspection based questions as part of their visit from a list of 16 questions (see Appendix 1) in order to support the Constabulary's preparation for an unannounced inspection. On 1st August 2016, HMIC/P arrived and conducted their inspection for 12 days. The ICV scheme was commended within the report for its 'constructively critical role' and 'consistently good working relationship' with the Constabulary.

Key areas of concern for the Constabulary from the HMIC/P inspection report were:

- The lack of continuity in leadership.
- Cultural change did not follow with changes to ways of working.
- Data quality was an issue and has limited the opportunities to improve.
- The condition of suites was recorded as disappointing – particularly Yeovil.
- The use of PAVA spray was inappropriate and overused.
- There was a need for better oversight of use of force.
- The rate of improvement from last inspection was too slow.

The full report can be found here: <https://www.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/hmiprisons/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2016/12/Avon-Somerset-Web-2016.pdf>

The introduction of an electronic reporting system

After a failed implementation of an electronic solution by Contensis last year, a different product was sought and purchased. Police Commissioner Solutions (PCS) are the leading provider of ICV electronic reporting tools, with over 8 schemes using their products. There were a number of challenges in the signing off of the product; the Constabulary's Corporate Information Management department weren't satisfied with the level of security provided by a cloud based product, but once it was fully understood that the only personal information ICVs log was the last 5 digits of the custody log number and therefore nothing identifiable, the purchase could go ahead. There were other difficulties in the implementation of the product, as the ICVs were going to be using custody terminals, it meant each ICV needed a unique Constabulary collar number with restricted access solely to the electronic report form, something the IT department's Specialist Project Team had never done before so setting up the logins with email, internet and all other functions disabled took almost 3 months as Force Vetting had to sign off each individual ICV before a collar number could be created. The face to face training sessions run by PCS took place on the last Friday and Saturday in January 2017; unfortunately the report form was not finalised in time for the sessions which meant the training was understandably confusing for many ICVs. Since its launch on 1st April 2017, there have been a number of teething issues with regard to logging in which has been difficult and frustrating for the ICVs; mostly due to IT issues with the Constabulary IT system and some snags with the form itself, but things are now moving forward more positively and the data produced by the form is of a far superior quality.

3. INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITORS

Following the closure of Yeovil police station, the ICV numbers currently stand at 36 (-11 on last year) across all three remaining panels. 8 ICVs were lost as a result of the closure, with none of the ICVs for that panel wanting to relocate to Bridgwater. 9 new ICVs joined the Patchway panel during the year, this was the only recruitment that took place as numbers in Bridgwater and Keynsham have remained static. Patchway has continued to suffer another year of high turnover, with several new recruits replacing the high number of leavers. ICVs from Yeovil very kindly supported the Patchway panel over the summer while recruitment took place to ensure the required number of visits still took place.

ICV Demographics

The average age of an ICV is 52 years old, with a visiting history of just over three years. Gender wise, the ICVs are split equally. Those categorising themselves as anything other than 'white' remains steady at 5%. 16% of ICVs consider themselves disabled. 90% of ICVs classify themselves as heterosexual, and there is a 50/50 split between those that uphold a faith and those that do not. 42% of visitors are retired, 46% are in some form of employment (including self-employment) and the remaining 12% are made up of those studying, those volunteering elsewhere and one ICV noted they were a carer. 66% of ICVs volunteer elsewhere as well as custody visiting.

Leavers

15 ICVs left the scheme during the year (-3 on last year); 4 ICVs had reached their 9 year tenure, 3 ICVs had secured employment within a Constabulary, 2 ICVs left the area and others left to embark on motherhood or due to ill health. One person left because they did not like being in a custody environment, and one person left due to the move to self-introduction. Gordon Czapiewski, Yeovil Coordinator stepped down after completing his 9 year tenure and Carole Collins took his place until the custody unit closed in April 2017.

OPCC Custody Visiting Officer

Anna Hill continued as the Custody Visiting Officer for the period.

4. STATISTICS

272 visits to police custody took place (-19 on last year) and 1096 interviews were held during the period (+47 on last year). The target was 280:

Patchway – 64 visits

Keynsham – 80 visits

Bridgwater – 81 visits

Yeovil - 47 visits

- There were 22,277 detainees held at the four units during the year.
 - Patchway – 8012
 - Keynsham – 6780
 - Bridgwater – 5418
 - Yeovil – 2067
- There were 1936 detainees in custody during the year at the time of the ICV visits (-427 on last year).
- 57% of detainees in custody were interviewed by ICVs. (+13% on last year)
- 38% of those in custody at the time of the visits were unable to be interviewed for a variety of issues such as the detainee being asleep, being interviewed, at hospital or receiving medical treatment or a recommendation from the custody staff that an individual was not safe to interview or there was no time. (-1% on last year)
- 15% of those available for a visit refused an interview (-13% on last year)
- There were 8 aborted/cancelled visits during the year; all aborted visits bar one were down to ICV issues rather than issues relating to staffing levels and busy custody units.

During 2016/17 9% of detainee's custody records were viewed by custody visitors which is a +4% improvement from last year, however guidance from ICVA and the National Preventative Mechanism suggests ICVs should be reviewing the custody records of those detainees on Level 2 observations ('Rouse and Respond') and this will be a focus for 2017-2018 as well as continuing viewing CCTV as part of the custody records checking process.

Delays in access to custody for visitors have been monitored since the new PFI police centres opened in September 2014. For the year 2016/17 the average wait times across the units are:

Patchway – 8 minutes (-1 from last year, -6 from 2014/15)

Keynsham – 11 minutes (+1 from last year)

Bridgwater – 8 minutes (no change from last year)

Yeovil – 4 minutes (-1 from last year)

The number of detainees at the new police centres continues to decrease. The average numbers of detainees in 2016/17 were:

Patchway – 10 detainees (-2 from last year, -4 from 2014/15)

Keynsham – 9 detainees (-1 from last year)

Bridgwater – 8 detainees (+1 from last year)
Yeovil – 2 detainees (-1 from last year)

*Please see annex 1 for detailed statistics by custody unit
Please see annex 2 for entry delay times and number of detainees*

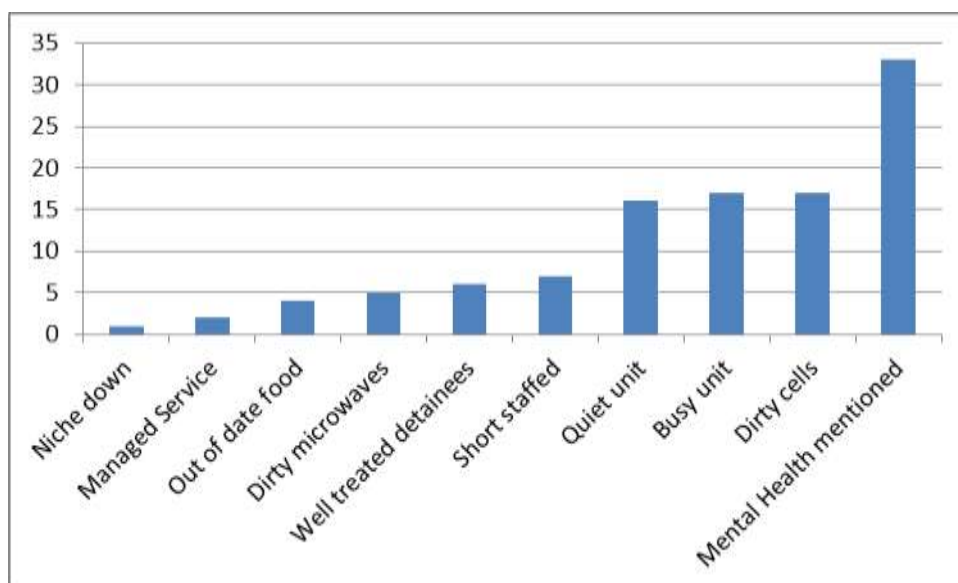
5. ISSUES ARISING FROM VISITS

Issues raised by custody visitors are dealt with immediately by the Detention Officer or Custody Sergeant wherever possible and this provides the most satisfactory resolution for the majority. If an issue cannot be resolved immediately in this manner the scheme administrator liaises with the Custody Inspectors and/or the Head of Custody.

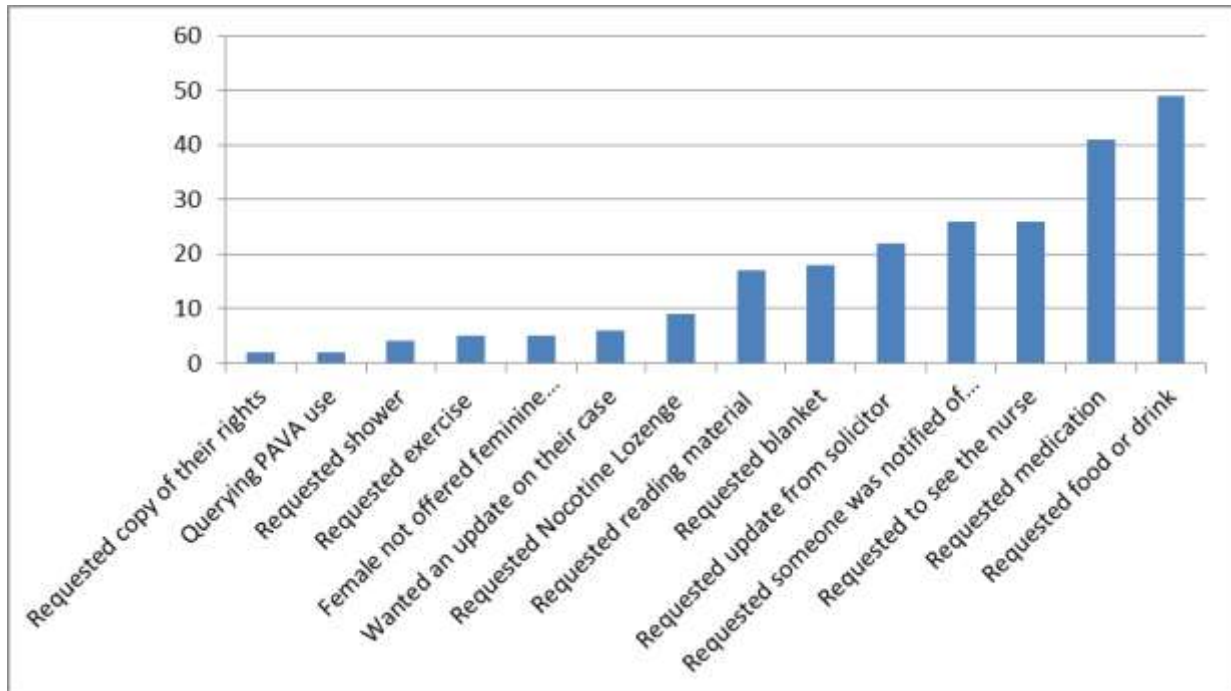
Issues raised for this period have been minor and most were in relation to building and contract issues at the custody sites. The issues raised by ICVs and subsequently resolved were:

- The lack of blankets and problems with them taking a long time to be laundered, also problems with fraying.
- The lack of towels, slip mats and slippers in a range of sizes available in the units.
- The problems with algae in the exercise yards, rendering them out of action.
- Dirty cells, particularly at Patchway, out of action for a number of months.
- Immigration cases and detainees not speaking English as their first language rose by 22% and so new translation sheets with ICV related questions in several languages were created to ensure that as many detainees as possible would be spoken to in the future.

Interestingly, the units were reported to be quiet almost as many times as they were busy. There were some mentions of Niche being down, as well as the units running as a 'managed' service. There were a number of mentions about detainees with mental health needs, despite there being only 5 s136 detainees in custody for the year (since the new legislation was introduced in June 2016) showing that ill mental health in custody remains a concern.



Requests for food and drink, medication or treatment from a nurse, having someone notified of their whereabouts and an update from their solicitor were the most popular requests made by detainees. The chart below outlines how often they were mentioned in the report forms.



The custody staff were praised by the ICVs for dealing with matters quickly and efficiently. On 154 of the report forms there were compliments made about the custody staff, how their visit was received and how they interacted with detainees.

6. PRIORITIES FOR 2017/18

Number of visits for 2015/2016:

The PCC has set in conjunction with the Chief Constable, a visiting frequency across the constabulary area against which performance is monitored, measured and published annually.

For the financial year 2016/2017 there will be a total of 220 visits, a reduction from last year as a result of Yeovil custody closing.

72 visits per year for each panel (approx. 1 visit every 4-5 days) plus additional visits at Keynsham over the Glastonbury period.

Embedding the Electronic Reporting solution

The main focus for the scheme in the coming year will be to fully embed the electronic reporting system and ensure all custody visitors are confident using it. Early feedback was gleaned at the Annual ICV Conference in early June 2017; ICVs were asked to note what they felt had been a success and what had been of particular challenge. The feedback will be discussed by panel coordinators and the scheme administrator at the quarterly Coordinators meeting with a view to addressing as many of the concerns as possible.

A focus on ICVs viewing custody records and/or CCTV for those of Level 2 'Rouse and Respond' observation levels

The IPCC Learning the Lessons briefings make it very clear that many of the deaths and serious incidents in custody happen when a detainee is on Level 2 observations but is not physically roused and/or incorrect custody log entries are made. Although there have been no incidents of this kind, it was felt this was something the ICVs should look at as part of their visits.

ICVA Scheme Accreditation

The National body for ICVs, the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) will be introducing an accreditation scheme in which ICV schemes will be graded platinum, gold or silver according to the health check information they received for all schemes in October 2016. Taking part is not mandatory but encouraged. It is hoped the Avon and Somerset scheme will take part in the accreditation.

New ICVA training materials

ICVA are in the process of launching new induction training materials as well as bite sized sessions that can be used at panel meetings or combined for half day training sessions.

Patchway at full strength

The Patchway panel has seen another year of flux in its visitors. It is hoped that following the targeted recruitment round in June 2017 that the panel will be at full strength.

7. UPDATES FROM PANEL COORDINATORS

Bridgwater: Panel Coordinator Rob Snow

With 12 ICVs and the least busy custody suite, the panel are doing really well. There have been, I believe, 2 aborted visits which were due to not getting into the suite/forgotten about at the front desk. With regards to this issue, I personally have noticed depending on which front desk staff are on, more occasions we are being let in by those staff. With regards to the electronic reporting, it's working with us, just. Some are still struggling, but I'm pairing those up as best possible with more competent visitors. There are a few issues with logging in at times, but with persistence and patience, we're getting there.

Patchway: Panel Coordinator Annaphie Rogers

We've had a high turnover of CVs this year at Patchway, going down to 9 at its worst, but have 5 new recruits due to start in late June. The new Custody Inspector has got involved in training by arranging custody ride-a-longs; this involves an ICV spending 4-6 hours in the custody suite observing the different roles. It gives the ICV a better understanding of what's involved and the pressures on the staff. So far 3 of the new ICVs have volunteered to take part and the scheme seems to be a great success. It is pleasing to be able to say that there have been no persons detained in the cells at Patchway under Section 136 Mental Health Act since the new policy came in to force in June 2016, although we still find people in the cells with mental health problems who have been arrested for low-level criminal offences.

Keynsham: Panel Coordinator John Sommer

Although we have lost one ICV we continue to do visits within our 4 day slots. The team has been amazingly flexible and supportive to ensure that this continues. This attitude of cooperation extends to visits. When we have had to seek clarification about the treatment of a detainee, this is not taken by the staff as criticism. We also compliment staff when things are done well as encouraging good practice is regarded by the panel as being the best way to help achieve high standards. As we are taken round the staff seem very knowledgeable of the people in their care. When it comes to processes they are often very informative which allows us to do our role well. Any issues we are concerned about get dealt with quickly. Any

general issues and discussions about how detainees are treated are discussed at panel meetings, where the Inspector, Ian Smart provides useful background.

Yeovil – Panel Coordinator Carole Collins

The panel was sad to hear the news that the police station was closing, although not entirely surprised. The team were happy to carry on visiting until the final few days and the team got together one last time with ex-Yeovil ICVs at a local pub to say their final goodbyes. It's only been a short time that I have been panel Coordinator, I would have liked to continue if the station had remained open. I'm very proud and pleased my visitors stuck it out until the very end!

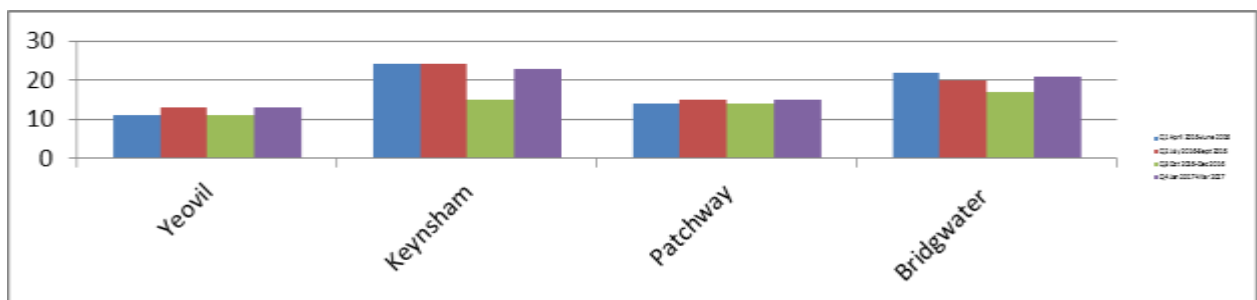
ANNEX 1 – STATISTICS IN DETAIL

1st April 2015-31st March 2016

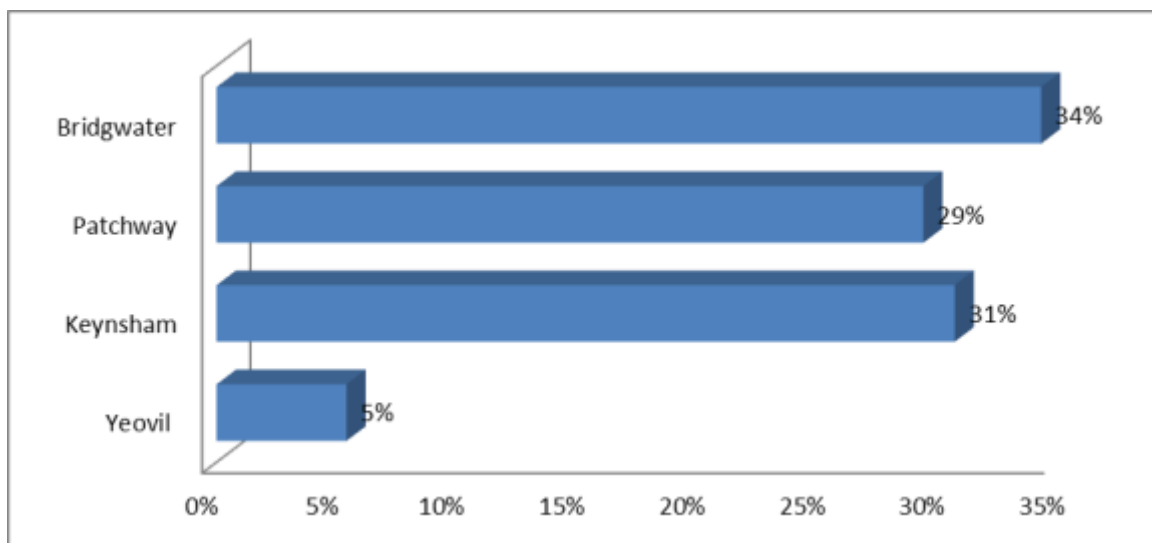
Key Performance Indicators

Performance Issue	Target	Actual	
Number of visits undertaken	280	272 (97%)	Target Not Achieved
Percentage of detainees refusing a visit	16% or less	15%	Target Exceeded
Percentages of Issues resolved on site	80% or higher	98%	Target Exceeded
Percentage of issues escalated to local criminal justice inspector	15% or less	1%	Target Exceeded
Percentage of issues escalated to Custody Manager or other	5% or less	3%	Target Exceeded

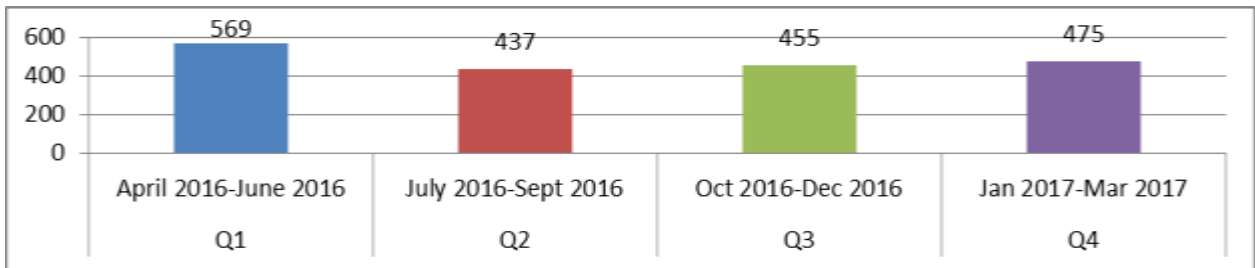
Number of visits undertaken



Percentage of detainees interviewed



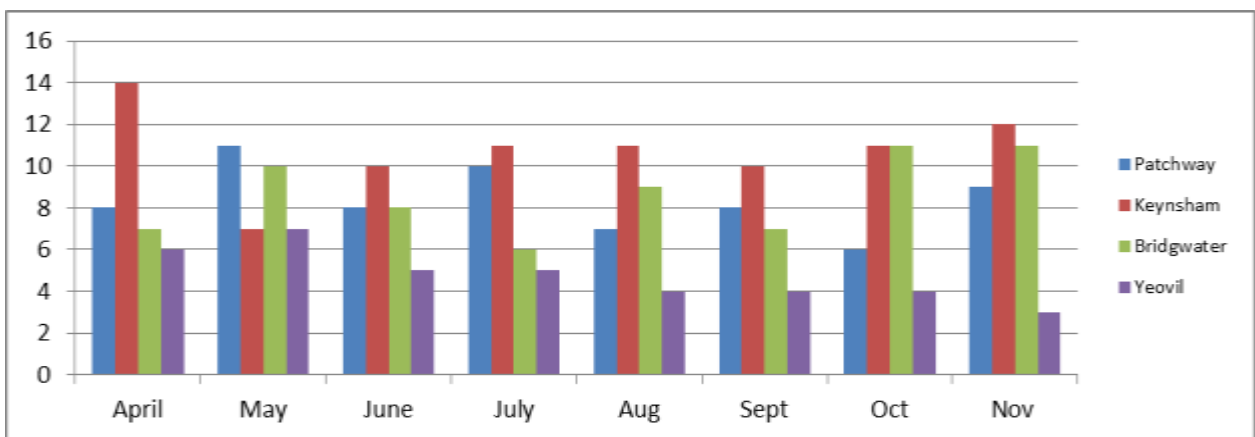
Number of detainees in Custody



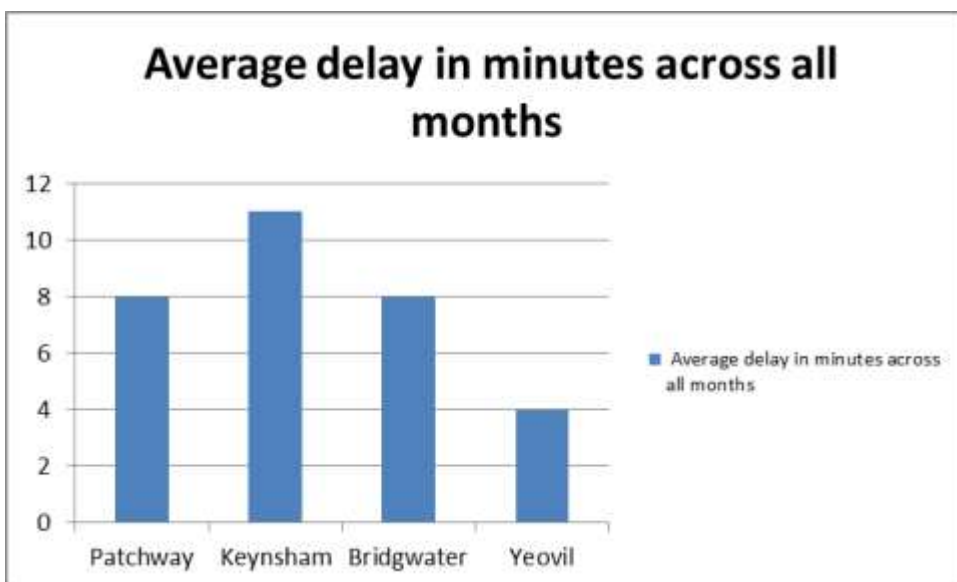
ANNEX 2 – DELAY TIMES AND NUMBER OF DETAINEES

1st April 2016 – 31st March 2017

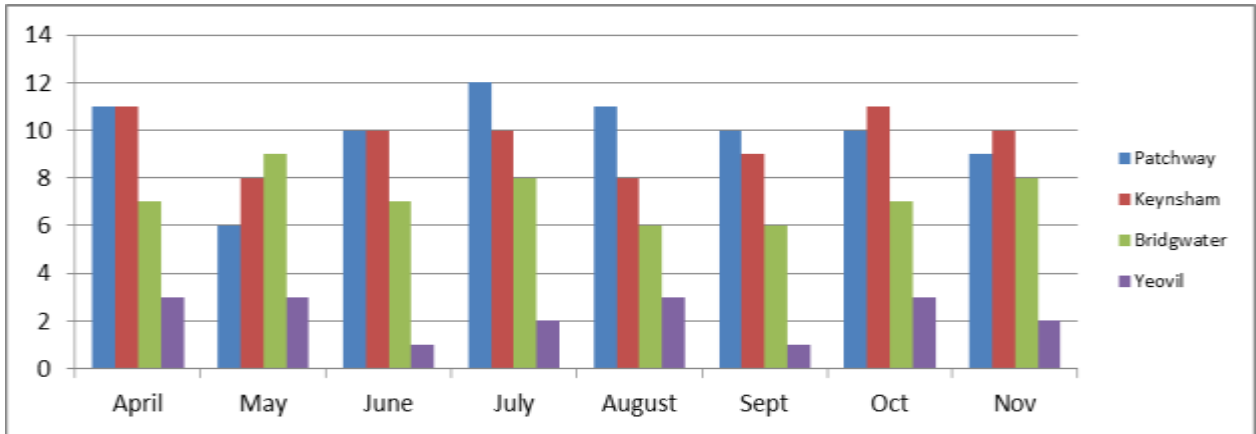
Average delay to visit start time in minutes by month



Average delay time in minutes across all months



Average number of detainees by month



Average number of detainees across all months

