

# **DISCONTINUANCE OF STREET CRIME CASES**

## **THEMATIC INSPECTION REPORT**

**17<sup>TH</sup> July 2002**

**Sponsor: DAC Stephen HOUSE, PRS**

**Inspectorate team: Insp. Keith OVERSTALL  
PS Iain GRANT**



**METROPOLITAN  
POLICE**

*Working for a safer London*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In respect of street crime cases, the data produced by the SCAT Tracker system is analysed by the Corporate Performance Analysis Unit, PRS7(2). This data is produced at Appendix A, table 3 of which shows that between 11th April 2002 and 10th July 2002, 46% of all court outcomes, to date, were discontinuances i.e. no evidence offered (NEO) in 24% of case outcomes and the remaining 22% were discontinued for a variety of reasons.

On 16th July 2002 BOCUs were required to produce detailed reasons for discontinuance, and reply the following day. The SCAT Tracker data showed the following headline reasons.

<b>Table 1 Tracker reasons</b>	NEO	Dis- charged	Dis- charged final	Dis- missed	With- drawn	Not shown	Other (*see list)	Total
Camden	3							<b>3</b>
Croydon	2							<b>2</b>
Hackney	1					1	4	<b>6</b>
Haringey	7						5	<b>12</b>
Islington	0					2		<b>2</b>
Lambeth	6						2	<b>8</b>
Lewisham	4	5	3	3	3			<b>18</b>
Newham	7							<b>7</b>
Southwark	2							<b>2</b>
Tower Hmlts	1						1	<b>2</b>
Waltham Frst	4						1	<b>5</b>
Wandsworth	1						1	<b>2</b>
Westminster	5					1	1	<b>7</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>76</b>

\*Further information was sought from boroughs for all discontinued cases **except** those listed: Alternative Public Order charge (2), CPS decide Victim unreliable (4), Discharged s.6(1) Mg Ct Act ('old style' committal) (4), Information withdrawn (1), No jurisdiction (1), Not ready at committal (1), Papers not served in time (1).

Lambeth and Hackney could not provide any additional information as requested. Southwark had not replied at the time of writing and Brent provided details even though there was no data recorded on Tracker.

The reasons provided by the remainder are shown in **Table 2** – No Evidence Offered and **Table 3** – Discharged, Dismissed, Withdrawn or reason not shown on Tracker. The numbers relate to number accused i.e. individuals charged, not individual crimes.

The summary of the 58 reasons behind both sets of decisions is as follows:

- Victim declined to attend (36%),
- Witness failed to appear (7%),
- Identification evidence (2%),
- CPS decide insufficient evidence (14%),
- Procedural errors (police) (5%)
- Procedural errors (CPS), (4%)
- Alternative charges preferred (14%),
- Reason not supplied (19%).

The full explanations provided by each BOCU for each case are contained separately in Appendix B.

<b>Table 2 NEO reasons</b>	Victim declined	Witness FTA	Identification	CPS insuff - icient evidence	Error Police	Error CPS	Altern-ative charge	Not known
Brent	1	2						
Camden	3							
Croydon		1		1				
Hackney								
Haringey	6			1				1
Islington								
Lambeth								6
Lewisham							2	2
Newham				2	1		2	
Southwark								
Tower Hmlts								
Waltham Frst		1				1		
Wandsworth								
Westminster			1	2				
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10 28%</b>	<b>4 11%</b>	<b>1 3%</b>	<b>6 17%</b>	<b>1 3%</b>	<b>1 3%</b>	<b>4 11%</b>	<b>9 25%</b>

<b>Table 3 Dismissed etc. reasons</b>	Victim declined	Witness FTA	Identification	CPS insuff - icient evidence	Error Police	Error CPS	Altern-ative charge	Not known
Brent	2							
Camden								
Croydon								
Hackney								
Haringey	3							
Islington						1		
Lambeth				1				
Lewisham				1			3	2
Newham								
Southwark								
Tower Hmlts	1						1	
Waltham Frst					1			
Wandsworth	1							
Westminster	4				1			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11 50%</b>			<b>2 9%</b>	<b>2 9%</b>	<b>1 5%</b>	<b>4 18%</b>	<b>2 10%</b>

<b>Table 4 ALL reasons</b>	<b>21 36%</b>	<b>4 7%</b>	<b>1 2%</b>	<b>8 14%</b>	<b>3 5%</b>	<b>2 4%</b>	<b>8 14%</b>	<b>11 19%</b>
--------------------------------	-------------------	-----------------	-----------------	------------------	-----------------	-----------------	------------------	-------------------

## Conclusions

1. Lewisham has a high rate of Discontinuance. They also have high rates of Judicial Disposal (15.7% last year against the MPS rate of 8%, ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>; 16.3% this year against the MPS's 9.1%, ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>).
2. Third (36%) of the reasons for discontinuance concern the failing of victims to be available throughout the case.
3. There were no reported incidents of police witnesses causing the case to be discontinued.
4. In over a quarter of the cases, the case was either dropped due to insufficient evidence (14%) or reduced (presumably) to an alternative charge (14%).
5. Tracker data is being questioned, with cases not showing the correct reason in some cases e.g. discontinued when in fact it was committed for trial.