



Crown Court

Annual Report 2004 - 2005

Inner London Sessions House Crown Court

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Annual Report by the Resident Judge and Court Manager

RESIDENT JUDGE & COURT MANAGER COMMENTS:

Workload

There was a slight decrease in PSD receipts but an overall increase perhaps due to a significant rise in bench warrant executions (65 in 03-04 compared to 309 in 04-05). Fewer cases were listed for trial this year (1215 against 1406) although the disposal rate remains constant. An increase in the number of cases outstanding over 36 weeks (6% custody and 7.42% bail in 03-04 against 8.22% custody and 11.54% in 04-05).

Cracked and Ineffective trials

There has been a further decrease in the ineffective trial rate. 03-04 ended on 22.6%, with a 52.2% effective rate and a 25.3% cracked rate compared to a 19.8% ineffective and a 52.6% effective and 27.6% cracked. The last 6 months have shown the greatest improvement in these figures. At the end of September 2004, the in-effectives had moved to 21.8% and the effective 49.3% with a cracked rate of 28.9%. With Case Progression moving to the list office, more work has gone into ensuring cases plead earlier, with defence attendance at select Pre Trial Reviews required, certificates of readiness and an effective case management Judge in place. Four of the last six months show an effective trial rate of over 55% (two in excess of 60%). December showed an unprecedented 40% cracked rate, however, this has now lowered to a more acceptable level of 26%.

Witness and Juror service levels

The juror utilisation figure of 73.6% is the best performance at the court since 2000/01 and reflects the hard work of the jury manager. Performance of witnesses in terms of waiting times and unnecessary attendance is disappointing and we must work hard with CJO colleagues to address issues surrounding witness warning and attendance.

Sitting days

2826 were sat in 04-05 compared to 2635 days the previous year which is still short of capacity of 3380. There were a number of problems with booking Recorders and these issues must be addressed in the coming year.

PSA 1 – S1, S2, S3, and S4 – cases commencing within target

There was a dip in timeliness from 79.57% to 73.13% resulting in missing the overall target for the year. Significantly, performance in relation to appeals dropped from 93.65% in 03-04 to 71.54% in 04-05. There was no significant increase in the PSD receipts for appeals but a large rise in the number disposed of (648 CSE's and 344 appeals this year against 539 and 241 respectively last year). A mid-year review (when only 60.94% of appeals were listed within target) led to the inclusion of appeals into case management. The CPS was often not ready for the appeals and adjournments were causing lengthy delays. The appeals against conviction are now listed for pre-appeal hearings four days in advance of the date to ensure readiness and more work is being done to get contact details for unrepresented parties. The last six months have shown a well received improvement in waiting times and we have well exceeded target since December 2004. Despite missing the overall target, for March 2005 – 100% of custody committal (82.52% FY), and 88.89% of custody Narey (81.24% FY) cases were heard within 16 weeks and 26 weeks of sending. The bail cases have had to slip in order to honour Custody Time Limits and custody appeals. The court still deals with 17.4% of all appeals in London and attempts have been made to redress the distribution as 50% of our workload should, according to committal workflows, be heard at Snaresbrook CC. We have tried to utilise a dockless courtroom at Southwark CC in order to bring our overall timeliness figure up but insufficient Recorders being available has meant this has not been effective to date.

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Type and length of cases heard at the court, including any changes or issues that have arisen.

There has been an increase in the average hearing time for cases, with a rise from 7.77 last year (the lowest on group) to 11.18 this year, the 5th highest.

The causes of ineffective trials and avoidable cracked trials

The year started with most ineffective cases being caused by the defence. More involvement in case tracker meetings and establishing contact points early on, led a move mid year. The rise in the effective trial rate combined with judicial vacancies not being filled led to a number of cases being stood out for administrative reasons. Reducing the number of cases in the warned list and the introduction of effective Pre Trial Reviews have gone a long way to resolve this problem. The court has begun to list as a 10 court centre to get round the uncertainty over judicial deployment which has prevented a further reduction in the warned list. Joint Performance Meetings with Police, CPS and Witness Service have been streamlined to focus on the issues around the cracked and ineffective trials, rather than looking into past cases. Greater attention will be given to the number of cases where the Prosecution offer no evidence on the day due to witness non-attendance to ensure that this occurs in advance where possible. More still needs to be done to tackle changes in plea on the day of trial and it is not clear what impact the Charging initiative is having in this respect. The CPS has also introduced separate Case Progression Officers for adult and youth cases and senior management attendance at the monthly JPM meetings raise persistent issues at the right management level. The court does not have a vacated trials policy as such and more effort is put into keeping trial dates. The number of fixtures / warned lists vacated at the PTR is low.

Witnesses and jurors and others who use the court

As mentioned previously more work needs to be done with regard to witness warning and reducing unnecessary attendance. The real issue the court has with jurors is the quality of the catering provided. Since the introduction of "compulsory" use of smartcards, the canteen has not been able to cope with juror numbers and the quality of the food is questionable. Complaints about the catering quadrupled since November.

The performance of the Prison Escort Contract

There has been a marked improvement in the delivery of defendants which can be traced back to the 29th August 2004. The new contractors, Premier, have contributed to a significant improvement in the delivery of defendants to Court. There is, however, real progress still to be made in several key areas to ensure Court time and resources are used productively. The previous regime of Securicor was marked by poor performance not only in terms of late or non production of prisoners but also in the numbers and training of their staff. Premier staff are seemingly better trained and far more accountable. The cells Supervisor in particular has been proactive in establishing a good working relationship with Court staff and ensuring effective communication. He in turn is supported by his Managers who conduct regular meetings with the Court Manager.

One area of ongoing concern is staffing levels. We are a busy 13 Court centre with a heavy daily workload and our Court Lists reflect this. At present Premier are unable to provide adequate staffing levels to meet this demand. While there are enough officers to staff the Court docks, there is not enough staff to bring defendants to and from the Court. This leads to serious delays as the Court waits for a dock officer to take each defendant to and from the cell area. This can lead to delays of up to 20 minutes for each custody case. By providing additional members of staff such serious delays could be averted.

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School Visits and other work with the community, including the involvement of the Police at the Court, through a Police liaison Officer- April 2004 to 2005

During 2004, Inner London gained Chartermark. The work undertaken to achieve this in relation to working closer with the community covered several areas including :

- visits for students from local schools, to gain an insight of the working environment in a Courtroom;
- work experience students at court each month;
- Bar and Police Mock trials organised to help assist new prospective Counsel and new police officers with the trial process;
- Police officers regularly using CREST system to update PNC results; and
- hosting a number of foreign Judges including from Brazil, South Korea and Honduras.

Accommodation

There are three success stories for the Inner London accommodation during the year: an additional security guard was funded to allow witnesses to use the Harper Street entrance to the witness suite without the need to go through main reception; an additional five conference rooms have been provided in the cells area which, subject to a few fixes will bring the total to ten; and, because of the listed nature of two of the courtrooms, there is an increase in film units filming at the court providing useful additional funding.

IT

Inner London was "LINKED" during the year and it has provided much needed IT support for court staff particularly in terms of email. At the end of the year the court began to prepare itself for the arrival of Xhibit which is due in September 2005. The court is also currently piloting "eplanner", an electronic diary system for List Officers which aims to make listing more efficient, effective and accessible to staff and the judiciary.

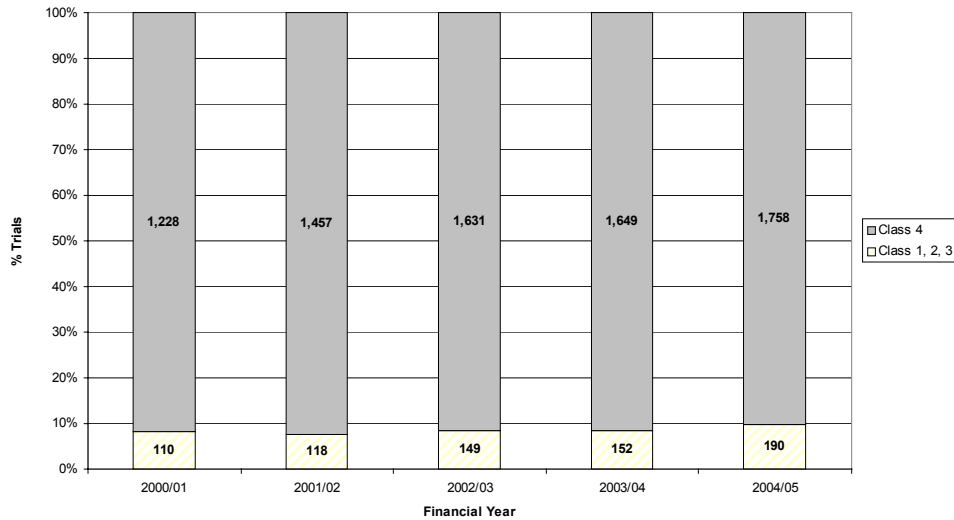
RESIDENT JUDGE:	HIS HONOUR JUDGE VAN DER WERFF	DATE:	27 May 2005
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COURT MANAGER:	STEVE TURNBULL	DATE:	27 May 2005
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Workload

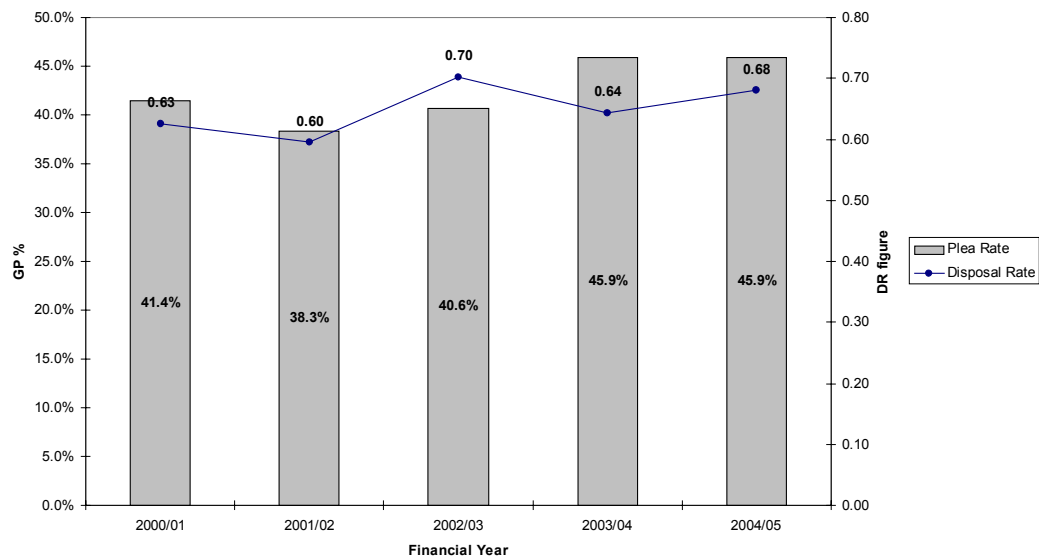
	EW 04/05	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	% Diff
Trial Receipts	78,737	1,338	1,575	1,780	1,801	1,948	8.2%
Class 1, 2, 3	11,337	110	118	149	152	190	25.0%
Class 4	67,400	1,228	1,457	1,631	1,649	1,758	6.6%

Trial Receipts by Class



	EW 04/05	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	% Diff
Sentence Receipts	30,430	468	404	586	597	607	1.7%
Appeal Receipts	12,742	289	270	290	307	306	-0.3%
Disposals	80,162	1,273	1,354	1,694	1,738	1,923	10.6%
Plea Rate	59.1%	41.4%	38.3%	40.6%	45.9%	45.9%	0.1%
Disposal Rate	0.79	0.63	0.60	0.70	0.64	0.68	5.8%

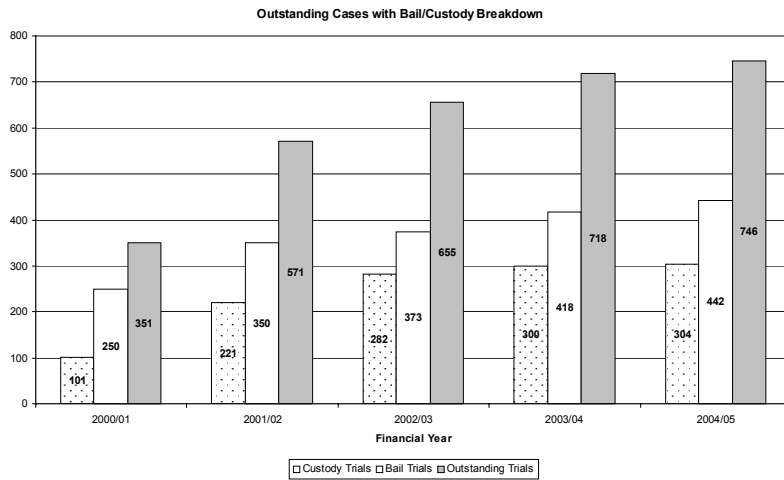
Guilty Plea Rate and Disposal Rate



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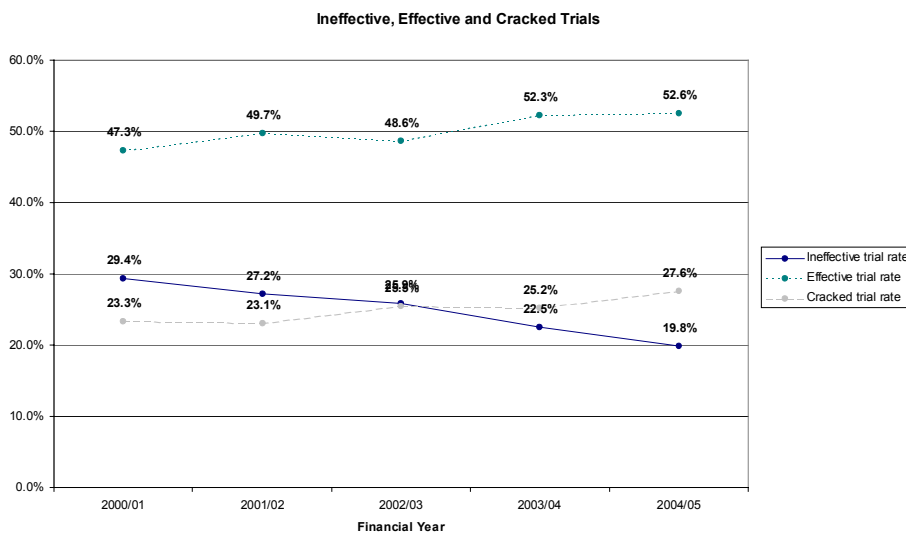
Outstanding Cases

	EW 04/05	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	% Diff
Outstanding Trials	28,389	351	571	655	718	746	3.9%
Custody Trials	8,906	101	221	282	300	304	1.3%
Bail Trials	19,483	250	350	373	418	442	5.7%
% over 16 weeks	39.6%	21.9%	30.5%	26.3%	40.3%	44.8%	11.2%
% over 48 weeks	5.5%	1.4%	1.2%	0.8%	2.6%	4.0%	52.0%



Cracked and Ineffective

	EW 04/05	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	% Diff
Trials listed (number)	44,155	1,209	1,323	1,559	1,411	1,215	-13.9%
Ineffective trial rate	15.8%	29.4%	27.2%	25.9%	22.5%	19.8%	-12.0%
Effective trial rate	45.1%	47.3%	49.7%	48.6%	52.3%	52.6%	0.6%
Cracked trial rate	39.2%	23.3%	23.1%	25.5%	25.2%	27.6%	9.6%

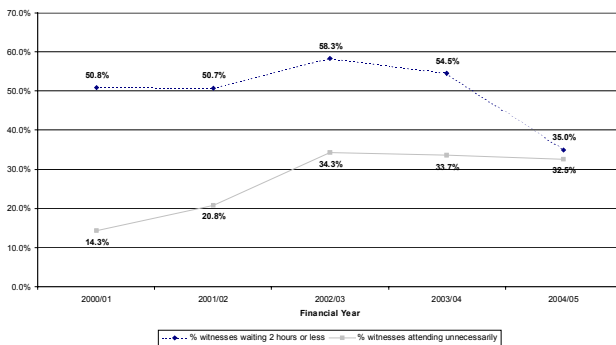


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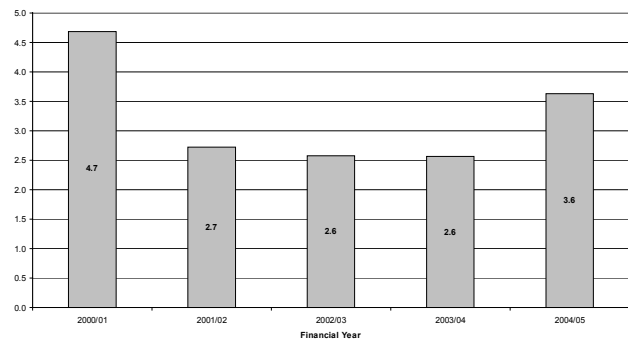
Witness and Juror service¹

	EW 04/05	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	% Diff
Juror days as % of attendance	56.1%	73.7%	71.1%	71.3%	72.8%	73.6%	1.0%
% witnesses waiting 2 hours or less	52.0%	50.8%	50.7%	58.3%	54.5%	35.0%	-35.9%
% witnesses attending unnecessarily	45.6%	14.3%	20.8%	34.3%	33.7%	32.5%	-3.3%
Hours waited (witnesses attending unnecessarily)	2.9	4.7	2.7	2.6	2.6	3.6	41.2%

Percentage of Witnesses Waiting Within Target and Proportion Waiting Unnecessarily



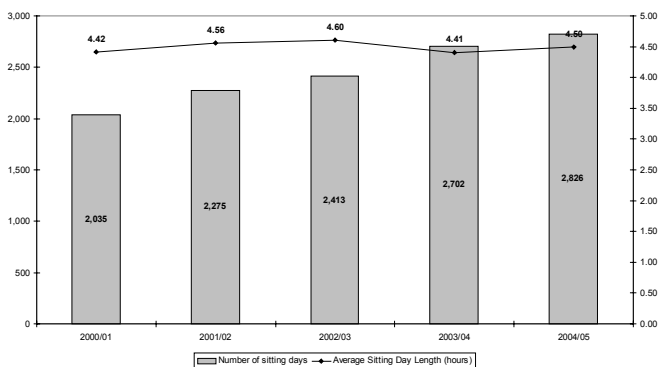
Average Waiting Time for Witnesses Attending Unnecessarily (hours)



Sitting Days

	EW 04/05	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	% Diff
Average Trial Hearing Time (hours)	9.6	9.4	9.0	8.6	7.8	9.2	18.7%
Average Guilty Plea Hearing Time (hours)	1.2	1.3	1.8	1.5	1.6	1.6	3.4%
Average Sitting Day Length (hours)	4.26	4.42	4.56	4.60	4.41	4.50	2.0%
Number of sitting days	101,818	2,035	2,275	2,413	2,702	2,826	4.6%

Number of Sitting Days & Average Length of Sitting Day



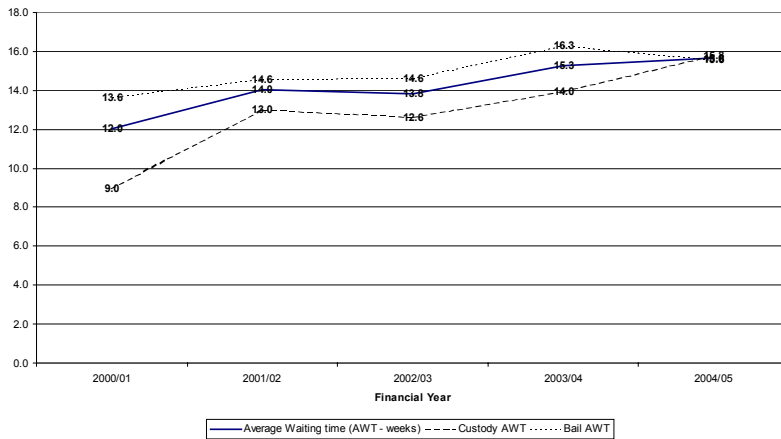
¹ Witness Surveys are from the November survey except 2003/04 which uses the June survey
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Waiting Times

	EW 04/05	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	% Diff
Average Waiting time (AWT - weeks)	15.4	12.0	14.0	13.8	15.3	15.6	2.5%
Custody AWT	14.0	9.0	13.0	12.6	14.0	15.8	13.1%
Bail AWT	16.0	13.6	14.6	14.6	16.3	15.6	-4.6%

Average Waiting Time



PSAs

	EW 04/05	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	% Diff
% Defendants commencing in target	78.4%	82.8%	78.4%	81.8%	79.6%	73.1%	-8.1%
Committal for Trial	72.2%	76.2%	71.2%	76.7%	72.0%	66.0%	-8.3%
Sent for Trial	76.1%	100.0%	89.5%	82.5%	79.7%	73.3%	-7.9%
Committal for Sentence	89.2%	82.6%	81.9%	88.0%	88.4%	86.2%	-2.5%
Appeal	88.1%	93.8%	95.1%	89.7%	93.7%	71.5%	-23.6%

Percentage Cases Commencing Within Target
(Trials 16 weeks, Sent for Trial 26 weeks, Sentence 10 weeks, Appeal 14 weeks)

