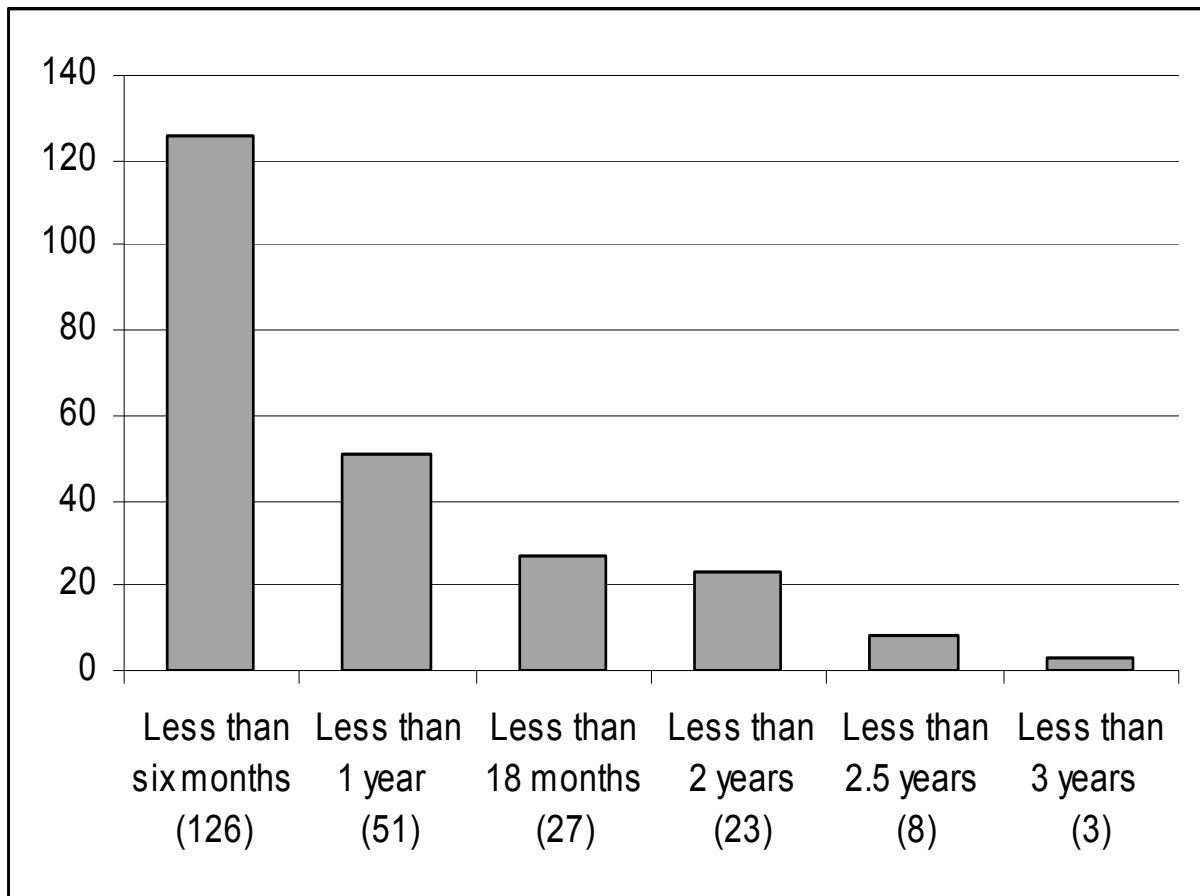


How long must we wait?

Detention is not meant to be a punishment. The detainee is detained for purely administrative reasons – he or she is in a queue. The Home Office, despite repeated requests, does not keep records of how long people wait in the queue and so Haslar Visitors Group would like to help.

We hold complete records for 238 men who left detention in 2008. All had been in Haslar though some had moved to other centres before their detention ended. Three unfortunates spent nearly three years locked up in prison like conditions before being released; 11 spent over two years; 34 over 18 months.



Haslar Visitors Group believes Liberty deeply important – nobody should be deprived of it lightly. Most readers of the article would be outraged had they to spend a single night in detention waiting for bureaucrats to do their job. Yet not only is long term detention routine, it isn't even quantified. Until two years ago the figures were published - but since then the Home Office has weakly complained that it cannot release the figures as they "aren't robust enough". We suspect they don't want too much attention focused on the problem.

The Asylum Rights Campaign did a similar exercise in December 2008 and came up with similar figures to Haslar for comparable centres. IRC Colnbrook, a high security centre which is not comparable, has more people in long term detention – one for nearly four years.