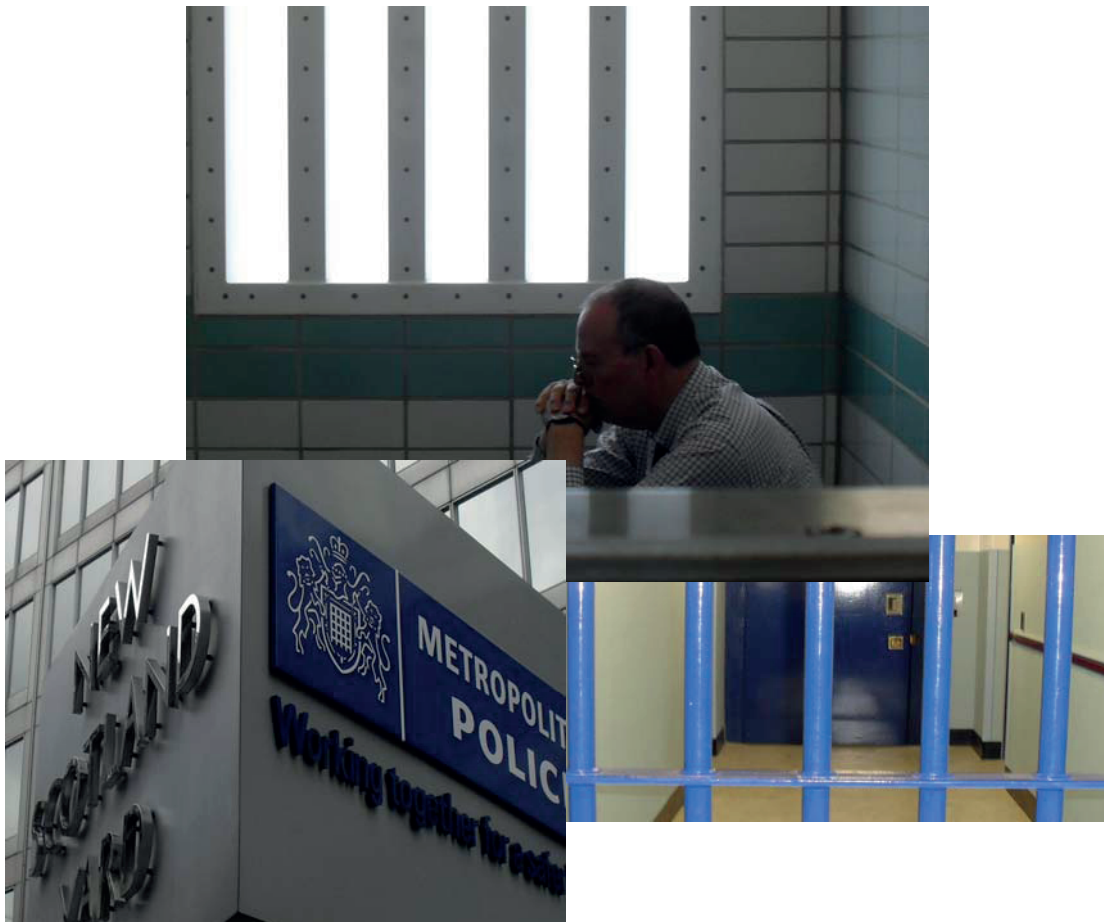


The London Independent Custody Visiting Scheme Annual Report 2010



Welcome to the 2010 annual report of the London Independent Custody Visiting Scheme (ICV) Scheme.

I would like to thank all our volunteers for their dedication and hard work throughout 2010. The MPA and the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) appreciate the vital contribution they make to help improve the standard of custody provision in London.

Kit Malthouse
Chair
Metropolitan Police Authority



Why we're here and what we do

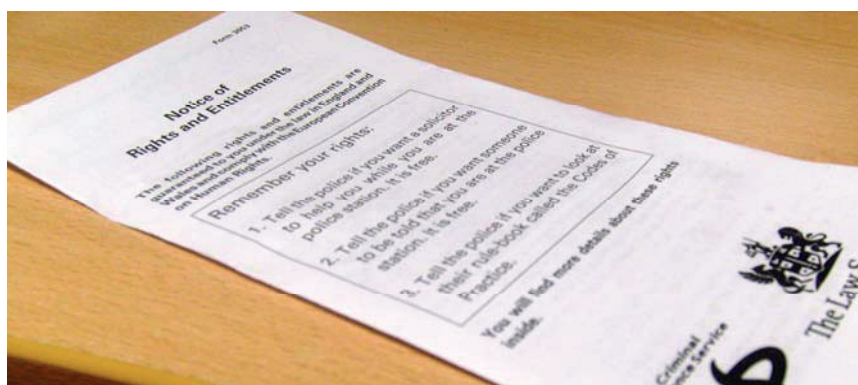
The ICV Scheme (formerly known as Lay Visiting) was introduced in the 1980s following a recommendation in Lord Scarman's report into the civil disturbances in Brixton. He recommended a system of independent, unannounced inspections of procedures and detention in police stations. Since then panels of independent custody visitors (ICVs) have evolved throughout the UK as an important means of securing police accountability for the local communities they serve. The Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) is an

independent statutory body, which exists to make sure that London's police are accountable for the services they provide to people in the capital. It is made up of 23 members who scrutinise and support the work of the police. The MPA has a legal obligation, under the Police Reform Act 2002, to provide a custody visiting scheme in its area. The scheme has the full support and cooperation of the Commissioner and each Borough Commander, but is independent of the police.

The MPA holds overall responsibility for the scheme's management and administration.

The scheme is made up of over 450 volunteers across 31 London borough based panels, (Havering and Redbridge have a joint ICV panel). The panels visit each 24/7 operational custody suite in their boroughs every week, and attend regular face to face meetings with police. The MPA also has a contract to deliver a custody visiting service to five British Transport Police custody suites in London.

At twice yearly meetings at the MPA ICV panel chairs and vice chairs take the opportunity to raise issues of concern on behalf of their members, receive updates from the MPA on a range of issues and share experiences with colleagues from other boroughs. The ICV Scheme reports to the MPA Community Engagement and Citizen Focus Sub-committee and Police Community forums, all of which are open to the public.



Visits — the numbers

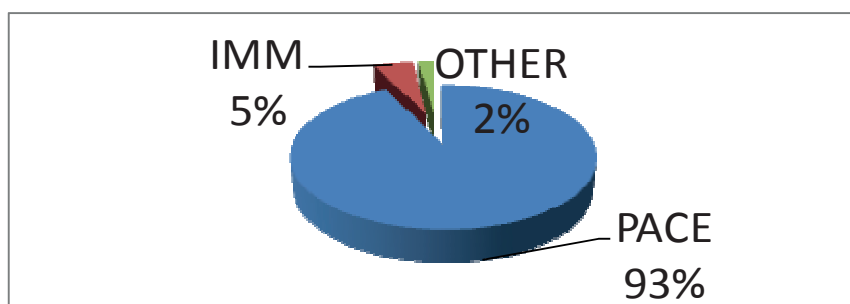
A total of 3041 visits were made in 2010, which is 87% of all scheduled visits.

9607 people were detained in custody at the time ICV visits were conducted, of which 5578 (58%) were interviewed by ICVs. The reasons why detainees might not be interviewed are varied but include being out of the cell, being asleep, or for health and safety reasons. A detainee can also decline an interview.

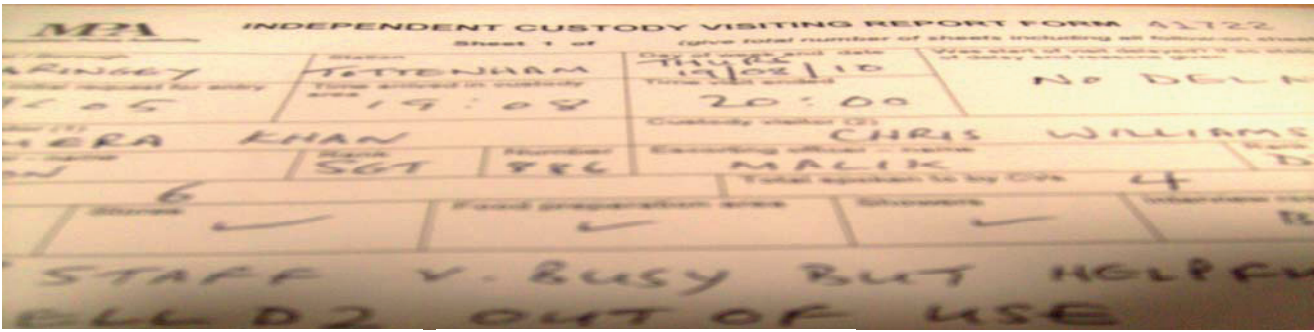
Visible checks can be carried out on those detainees who are not interviewed.

The majority of those in detention were being held under PACE (the Police and Criminal Evidence Act) with a small percentage held

under immigration regulations (IMM) or for “other” reasons which can include remand prisoners or those held under anti-terrorist legislation.



Visits — what we found



Happily, few of the concerns raised during the vast majority of ICV visits in 2010 were about the treatment of detainees. Those issues raised tend to be relatively minor environmental concerns, often connected to the physical state of the custody suites, or the availability of adequate custody staff to deliver anything more than a very basic service.

Mental Health concerns

The single most frequent concern raised in 2010 centred on the number of detainees who appear to display mental health problems and the strong suspicion, often echoed by custody staff, that police cells are not the best place for them to be held. A number of boroughs have secured agreements with local social services for mental health assessments to be carried out within a number of hours to expedite the release of such detainees to more appropriate environment.

In December funding was agreed for a three year pilot to provide psychiatric health care to detainees in Lambeth police custody suites. We look forward to hearing the results.

Showers and exercise

The opportunity to take a shower and/or fresh air is a regular and ongoing issue when detainees are held for more than a few hours. This can be especially problematic for immigration detainees who may be held for a number of days. A lack of staff (or suitable staff e.g. female staff to supervise showers for female detainees) is often the reason given by custody staff when the issue is raised by ICVs. Visitors acknowledge this but have expressed frustration that detainees are rarely informed that such facilities are available to them. The MPA and the Met are exploring ways to encourage a more pro-active approach among custody staff.

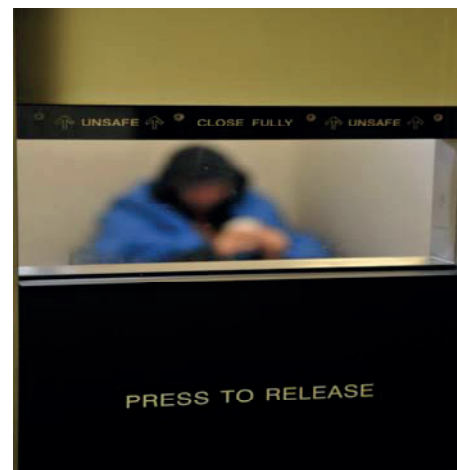
Diversity issues

Detainee diversity data is recorded by the police, but not by visitors. ICV panel membership is diverse and visitors strive to deliver an impartial service. Panels have identified that language can be a problem, often making a full interview impossible. All custody suites now have access to a number of language services which can be used to enable a basic interview where ICVs have concerns over a detainee who appears to be

particularly distressed or vulnerable.

Towels..this year's blankets?

ICVs shared detainees' frustration that only paper towels are available for use after a shower. Wrangling over contract issues echoes that over blanket provision in previous years.



'A small act of kindness ...'

As well as reporting findings to the community ICV visits often have an immediate impact for a detainee. ICVs are able to pass on requests which the detainee may not have relayed to the custody staff. This may be something very important such as the need for medical attention, or something seemingly small like a drink or an extra blanket. Volunteers often find this is to be the most rewarding part of visiting.

What else happened this year?

Under the MPS Herald programme the roll out of Custody Nurse Practitioners (CNPs) in police custody suites continued. By December 2010 nine boroughs had CNPs in place.

A custody build programme delivered a new, purpose built custody suite at Leyton in east London in November. Further new suites will open in Barking and Heathrow in 2011.

The IPCC produced a report from a 10 year investigation into deaths in (and following)

police custody. MPS has already made considerable progress in terms of the recommendations on the report. Certainly those recommended actions that refer to ICVs already form part of London visitors' routines.

The MPS launched the '4Rs' initiative in custody suites to improve the monitoring of detainees who are intoxicated. Magnetic '4R' stickers are attached to cell doors prompting staff to carry out regular checks. They can also prompt ICVs to ask pertinent

questions about the detainee.

The 4Rs are;

Rousing – not just checking to see if they are breathing but actually waking them up

Response – to questions

Response - to commands or instructions

Remembering – any pre existing health conditions



2011 and beyond

Although police authorities are likely to be abolished in 2011, the provision of an ICV scheme is one of the statutory obligations held by the MPA that will continue under the new body that replaces it, the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPC). This suggests that the value of the work carried out by custody volunteers is recognised by government and no changes to the way visiting is conducted are anticipated.

A London ICV Scheme Conference is planned for September 2011.

A pool of visitors with enhanced security clearance will be established for the purpose of visiting detainees held under terrorism legislation (TACT) in line with changes to Home Office Codes of Practice.



The London ICV Scheme will continue to recruit, train, guide and seek to recognise and reward the community volunteers who work on its behalf.

London ICV Christmas Social Event at City Hall

For more information about the London ICV Scheme please contact:

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To view the Annual Report of your local borough ICV panel visit:

www.mpa.gov.uk/partnerships/icv