

London ICV Newsletter

October 2011

London ICV Conference

On a sunny Saturday morning in September 77 ICVs and 12 members of the MPS attended the Riverbank Park Plaza Hotel by the Thames for the forth London ICV Scheme Conference. Delegates from Scotland, Wales and Co Durham also made the journey to attend the conference, the subject of which was “Dignity with Detention”. The delegates were given presentations by Alyson Kilpatrick, a Human Rights advisor to, among other organisations the Northern Ireland Policing Board, Sean Sullivan and Mark Ewan from HIC/HMIP, Superintendent Annette Wightman from Custody Directorate, Siobhan Coldwell, from the MPA and Sergeant Roger Macmillan, MPS lead officer on Custody Officer training.



Alyson Kilpatrick gave a broad based presentation on Human Rights, the way human rights issues are sometimes misrepresented in the media, and also the work that has been taking place in Northern Ireland around instilling Human Rights in custody settings. She also gave some ideas on how the UK can move forward with this.

Supt Annette Wightman spoke about the plans for a better matching of custody provision to

demand and how this received an early and severe test as a result of the disturbances seen in London in August. As well as hailing the value of custody visiting Annette implored ICVs to keep reporting their findings, even if they feel they are raising the same issues again and again.



Siobhan Coldwell is Head of the Policing, Policy and Oversight Unit at the MPA in which the ICV Scheme sits. She gave an update about the abolition of the MPA and the creation of its replacement body the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime (MOPC). She restated the expectation that although we anticipate changes to custody provision in London, the establishment of MOPC will be not affect the requirements of custody visiting.

Sean Sullivan and Mark Ewan from HMIC/HMIP gave an overview of the six year national police custody inspection programme. They gave examples of some of the issues they have come across, especially in London, as well as recommendations that have been made as a result. For anyone who would like to take a closer look at the inspections that have taken place so far, you can find these at <http://www.hmic.gov.uk/>



[inspections/joint-inspections/joint-inspection-of-police-custody-facilities/](#)

Sgt Roger Macmillan’s presentation gave an insight of custody training within the MPS and restated the primary objective of custody staff as the health and well-being of those in their care.

One point that was repeated throughout the day by all the speakers was how greatly the work of ICVs is valued.

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London disturbances and the MPA response



visit by mid week.

Kit Malthouse, Chair of the MPA asked the ICV Team to convey this message to all ICVs;

“Firstly, can I say thank you for the efforts a large number of panels have been making in conducting extra visits in areas where disturbances have resulted in an increased number of arrests. The number of arrests means that every London custody suite will be in use and will result in a potential impact for every panel. We’ve been in contact with those carrying out the visits to collate any relevant information and can report a positive picture in terms of the treatment of those being detained. This is an important message to convey to the community at this time.

I know a lot of ICVs are active in their

communities in a number of ways, in churches and faith groups, schools and community associations and other activities connected to police and community relations. I would ask that you take the opportunity to relay the message to your community contacts to reassure them that those in police detention are being properly treated...”

August saw the worst disturbances and looting in London in recent years. In response to the large number of people being arrested custody suites across the capital were quickly approaching their capacity, with a rapid turnover of people being detained and taken to court. During this time some ICVs took the initiative and carried out extra visits. As well as this the MPA and some Borough Commanders requested extra visits. This resulted in almost every custody suite in London receiving at least one

panels have been making in conducting extra visits in areas where disturbances have resulted in an increased number of arrests. The number of arrests means that every London custody suite will be in use and will result in a potential impact for every panel. We’ve been in contact with those carrying out the visits to collate any relevant information and can report a positive picture in terms of the treatment of those being detained. This is an important message to convey to the community at this time.

Rather than wait for visit report forms to arrive, the ICV Team received telephone or email reports from ICVs conducting the extra visits and were very quickly able to report that, despite enormous pressure on custody, detainees continued to be treated well.

At the September meeting of the MPA’s Strategic and Operational Policing Committee the acting chair, Lord Toby Harris, commended the efforts of the MPS custody staff, the ICV Team and, especially, the volunteer ICVs for their response.

New Zealand Delegate Visit

Janis Adair, National Manager Investigations at the Independent Police Conduct Authority (IPCA) in New Zealand, visited the MPA in the month of July to find out how the London ICV Scheme operates.

The IPCA is an independent body set up by the NZ Parliament to investigate incidents by the Police, similar to the IPCC in the UK. It is also responsible for monitoring conditions of detention and treatment of detainees in Police custody.

Janis had the opportunity to tour Charing Cross custody facility and met with ICVs and custody staff.

She also shadowed an inspection by HMIP/HMIC of Hammersmith police custody suites.

Ms Adair commented that New Zealand does not have an ICV scheme in place and she would commend the work of the scheme on her return.

In recent years the London ICV

Scheme has hosted delegations from China, Russia, the Ukraine and Belgium. All have expressed the view that the single most impressive aspect of custody visiting in the UK is that the work is conducted by volunteer members of the community, and that this gives the scheme a credibility that goes beyond any other monitoring regimes.



Legal Aid

Bexley ICV Andy Johnson would like to draw attention to the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Bill currently going through Parliament:

“All ICVs know that one of the 3 basic rights available to detainees under PACE is the right to access free legal advice. However this Bill contains a clause which, if it becomes law, will allow the Ministry of Justice to remove the absolute right to free advice and replace it with a system of means testing and/or merit testing.

It is not clear how any new arrangements would work. Clearly it is impractical to carry out a full means test in custody, especially outside normal office hours since things like income, entitlement to benefits, etc cannot easily be verified. Even a much simplified test would still place an extra burden on both custody staff and the Defence Solicitors Scheme.

As ICVs we have an excellent opportunity to see the vulnerable state of many people whilst they are in custody and to appreciate how much some would benefit from some legal advice and assistance at this early stage. Not all detainees accept the offer of free legal advice. Faced with a means test and the additional delays this will entail, it seems reasonable to conclude that that number will decrease and of course since some who want advice will fail the means/merit tests, the overall number who actually receive the free advice may also decrease. This may well be the aim of the measure because it will save money from the overall Legal Aid bill which currently stands at £2.1 Billion. However, it is arguable that it will also damage the interests of justice and impact on individuals”.

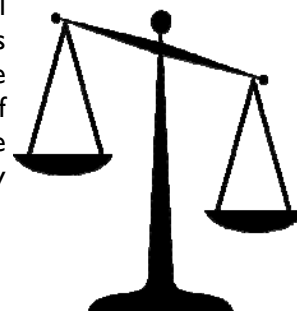
The MPA and ICVA are aware of the Bill and its potential implications and are monitoring its progress. At present it presents

no immediate challenges to custody visiting.

Although there is nothing in PACE itself about Legal Aid, there are numerous references in the Codes of Practice and when the Bill is passed, the Home Office will need to consult on potentially changing the Codes.

Many thanks to Andy for this submission. The ICV Team is always keen to hear of potential articles for the newsletter.

Andy also recommended a blog at <http://thecustodysgt.blogspot.com/> which, as it says on the tin, offers useful insights into the world of the custody sergeant.



Refresher training—top tips!

This edition we are going to look at **Self Introduction**:

What is self introduction?

Self-introduction involves ICVs introducing themselves directly to detainees and enquiring whether or not the detainee wishes to see them. ICVs will also directly ask the detainees if they can look at their custody record.

Why use it?

Three pilots, including two in London, demonstrated that self introduction delivers an increase in acceptance rates to offers of visits?

Why would detainees respond

more positively to self introduction rather than introductions by an escorting officer?

- ICVs are better at introducing themselves to detainees
- Detainees see that ICVs are ordinary people
- It puts the detainees at ease.
- There is less suspicion when not introduced by police officers
- ICVs' approach, language and intonation is more credible and they are better placed to fully explain the why they are visiting

If you were introducing yourself to a detainee, what words or phrases should you try to use?

- Independent

- *Impartial*

- *Members of the Community*

- *Check on treatment*

- *Check on conditions*

- *We are not concerned with reason for detention*

- *Would you like to speak to us?*

Some myths clarified

- *Police will carry out the same risk assessment that they undertake for standard visits.*

- *ICVs will not be permitted to enter a cell when advised against it by the staff.*

- *ICVs are still escorted by police staff, who stay within sight but out of hearing for the duration of the visit.*

Metropolitan Police Authority

10 Dean Farrar Street
London
SW1H 0NY
Phone: 0808 100 1036
Fax: 020 7202 0200
Minicom: 020 7202 0173

**FREEPOST address
for report forms and
application forms only:**

ICV Coordinator
Metropolitan Police Authority
FREEPOST LON17808
London
SW1H 0DY

**Coordinator
contacts**

Annette Dhillon – 07768 905 678
annette.dhillon@mpa.gov.uk
Barnet, Bromley, Enfield, Havering &
Redbridge, Newham, Waltham Forest.

Florence Haynes - 07768 868 055
Florence.Haynes@mpa.gov.uk
Harrow, Lambeth, Lewisham, Merton,
Southwark, Sutton.

Jennifer Ankrah - 07768 902 575
jennifer.ankrah@mpa.gov.uk
Barking & Dagenham, Hammersmith &
Fulham, Kensington & Chelsea,
Richmond, Tower Hamlets,
Westminster.

Mike Dodsworth - 07768 886 278
mike.dodsworth@mpa.gov.uk
Bexley, Brent, Ealing, Greenwich
Hillingdon, Kingston.

Tony Hawker - 07768 904 270 or
tony.hawker@mpa.gov.uk
Camden, Croydon, Hackney, Haringey,
Islington, Wandsworth.

ICV Scheme Manager:
James Tate - james.tate@mpa.gov.uk
Hounslow.

**Welcome to new
ICVs!**

Bromley
Angus Kinloch
Camden
Wei Kiat Chen, Graham
FitzGerald
Croydon
David Alston
Ealing
Susan Lindo, Wendy Matthews
Hackney
Chris Mallett, Elaine Smith
Hammersmith & Fulham
Garvin Henry
Havering and Redbridge
Jeanette Martin, Kira Chana
Simon MacKenzie, Veena Bhatt
Islington
Jenny McNeill
Kensington & Chelsea
Wendy Webster
Lambeth
Kalifa Garba, Malgorzata
Madrawska, Lucy Bonnerjea
Newham
Alvin White
Richmond
Anthony Beavan
Southwark
Henry Ajayi, John Al-Davies
Wandsworth
Manisha Popat, Katherine
Fothergill, Annie Bowman

**Dates
for your diary**

Below are the dates for ICV training and meetings at the MPA offices. Next years dates are to be arranged.

Initial training:

Saturday 29th October 10am-4pm at the MPA.

Diversity training:

Monday 7th Nov, 6.30-8.30pm at the MPA

ICVA National Conference:

Saturday 19th Nov at the Belfast Hilton

ICV Christmas Social:

Monday 12th Dec, 7– 8.45pm, London's Living Room, City Hall.

And finally...

Have Your Say on Policing in London

The Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) is consulting on London's policing priorities. We are interested in your opinion.

Please take part in a short questionnaire to tell us your views. To complete a questionnaire go to:

www.mpa.gov.uk/publications/policingplans/haveyoursay

or call 0207 202 0063, leave your name and address and you will be

sent a paper copy.

If you require a telephone questionnaire please call 0207 202 0063, leave your name and telephone number and somebody will call you back.

Please feel free to pass details of the consultation on to your friends, family or colleagues. The consultation closes on Friday 25 November 2011.

We look forward to hearing your views on policing in London.