

**Extract from the independent report on the MPA Scheme by Ian Smith (p21-23)**

**5.7 Consultant-led findings**

Based on the findings of this review and consistent with the statutory obligations as contained in PRA 2002 para 51, the consultants overall assessment is as follows:-

**5.7.1 MPA**

- Has an opportunity to lead independent custody visiting provision within UK
- Inherited an ineffective, inefficient service provision
- Is not meeting its statutory responsibilities as outlined in the Police Reform Act 2002, Paragraph 51
- Does not collect reports on visiting outputs and performance
- Does not currently have a clear stated purpose nor development strategy for independent custody visiting and therefore cannot use resources effectively or efficiently and cannot perform to its potential
- All stakeholders want further guidance and leadership from MPA
- Members currently do not have an apparent role in the running of the scheme
- Allocates sufficient budget - if deployed effectively - to run a basic comprehensive scheme
- Does not issue universal and correct identity cards
- Is not represented in selection and appointment process for independent custody visitors
- Does not centrally collate interview records

**5.7.2 Scheme Administrator**

- Inappropriate status and grade for role
- Poor support for, and management of, this post
- Poor liaison with all stakeholders
- No power to ensure compliance by panels, visitors or MPS
- No means of raising immediate concerns with MPS
- No liaison with senior MPS ACPO officer with force-wide responsibilities for independent custody visiting issues.

**5.7.3 Panel Secretaries**

- Largely well regarded by independent custody visitors as administrative support
- Some panel secretaries appear to be intimidated by their panels of independent custody visitors

- This role is under-resourced by employers and seen by all 'delivery' stakeholders as not having enough time or status
- Seen by many as administrative secretaries only and the importance of this role needs further investment and support.

#### **5.7.4 The Police Service**

- There is inconsistent involvement with police in both training and the running of schemes
- In more developed schemes within UK, independent custody visitors have open access to custody officer training
- as part of the police service commitment to transparency values
- Current MPS ACPO lead officer responsible for Criminal Justice Units has no contact with MPA on independent custody visiting issues
- Current MPS ACPO lead officer responsible for Criminal Justice Units is very familiar with independent custody visiting from previous roles and views the practice as a positive contribution to effective policing. He should be viewed as a positive change partner
- There is a common view held by independent custody visitors that many police staff are unaware of the process
- Custody officers regard independent custody visiting as necessary
- Custody officers regard independent custody visiting as useful for helping to affect and action changes that they also want to happen
- Police attitude to independent custody visitors is influenced by their own perceived lack of resources such as time, custody staff and information
- Custody officers desire more initial training on independent custody visiting for all police staff at probationer level.

#### **5.7.5 Independent Custody Visitors**

- Highly committed
- Massive organisational resource for police authority
- Seen by some as officious and lacking clear parameters of operation
- Complications over the word 'independent' in light of the statutory obligations on police authorities to 'manage' their performance. This has been exacerbated by a lack of leadership, management, operating guidelines and volunteer policies/contracts. For debate, the visitors are selected because they are independent community members at the time of recruitment, but must operate inter-dependently with MPA and MPS to facilitate the actual process
- Regarded by all 'delivery' stakeholders as being very competent in the visit process
- Have a poor view of MPA
- Are over reliant on panel chairs for technical guidance
- Receive no performance feedback from MPA or MPS
- Could be more focused on good practice and praise.

### **5.7.6 Induction Processes**

- Lack of structural induction processes
- Most visitors value shadowing, mentoring and co-visiting as the key learning tool for new colleagues. However, these training styles - with only 1 visitor as the mentor for the length of the probation period - is open to 'mis'-training and over work
- There is no training available for how to induct colleagues
- CRB checks need to be quick for new visitors to maintain initial motivation.

### **5.7.7 Probation Periods**

- Current periods run from no timescales to 1 year
- There is a lack of clear 'passing out' criteria.

### **5.7.8 Recruitment Structure**

- The point of entry is the most important quality control area for panels
- Application forms lack correct data gathering techniques
- Not all applicants complete application forms nor attend interviews
- There is no standardised and informative application pack for prospective visitors.

### **5.7.9 Training**

- There is no training strategy for independent custody visiting within MPA
- There is huge discrepancy in the quantity and quality of training among all panels
- There is confusion over training, awareness raising and instruction.
- It is common for training needs to be simplistically viewed as initial training only with no continuous development.
- Several other UK schemes have training and development as a fixed agenda item at all panel meetings
- Evening and weekend training events were strongly favoured by independent custody visitors
- While volunteers preferred training sessions to last up to half a day/ 2hours, the initial training should remain as 1 day to capitalise on initial motivation and help volunteers become operational - and therefore motivated – as quickly as possible
- While weekday evening sessions are favoured by independent custody visitors, the quality of learning can be restricted at the end of a working day. Weekday evening events are best suited to presentations and less demanding activities
- It is important to provide training for new volunteers as soon as possible to maintain motivation.
- Police have more regular in-service training events and promotional structures and these could be made better use of by MPS/MPA to develop awareness of independent custody visiting

- ICVA has developed good quality comprehensive training materials, approved trainers and services
- There is no MPA provision for the training of police authority members in issues relating to scheme governance
- There is no MPA provision for the training of scheme administrators or panel secretaries
- There is no MPA provision for the training of panel chairs
- There is no training nationally relating to Terrorism Act and how it potentially impacts upon the independent custody visiting process
- There is no specialist cultural awareness and diversity training for independent custody visitors within MPA

#### **5.7.10 Qualifications**

- The idea of offering qualification-led training has been explored and it would appear that there is a simple split of opinion. While the merits of raising standards and the investment return for the students are clear, the negative impact would suggest a loss of excellent 'non-academic' community representatives which are required in terms of colloquialisms and empathy with detainees
- Qualifications may be more appropriate for scheme administrator or panel secretaries
- There is a noticeable movement nationally to encourage qualifications for voluntary work and the management of volunteers and meetings have been held with National Council for Voluntary Organisations and Volunteering England about independent custody visiting nationally
- The development of the 'Investors in Volunteers' programme by Volunteering England and the National
- Occupational Standards for Managing Volunteers by NCVO should be monitored. (This latter initiative will
- be an inspection-led award with accreditation).

#### **5.7.11 Diversity**

- There is a lack of awareness of how cultural and diversity issues affect detention processes and experiences
- There is some awareness of issues affecting people who are immigrant detainees
- The majority of panels require and desire further ethnic minority representation amongst visitors
- There is no operational means of collecting relevant data
- Access to marketing information for ethnic minority and diverse groups is poor.

#### **5.7.12 Visit Process**

- The visit process should be led by key performance indicators

- There is a critical lack of awareness of the Police Reform Act 2002, Paragraph 51.
- There is no awareness of the implications of the Terrorism Act on independent custody visiting
- Empty report forms are ineffective
- The process needs to focus on safeguarding systems, not isolated issues
- There is no feedback on good practice within custody suites
- The habitual pairing of the same visitors to conduct visits undermines practice development.

#### **5.7.13 Marketing**

- There is a lack of awareness about independent custody visiting in London
- The use of local press for scheme promotion has proved effective
- Increasing the number of applicants is an important key to improving the quality of visitors
- MPA should be UK leader in this practice as a quarter of the entire Criminal Justice System is based in London
- The current poster used by the MPA - 'Do you want to keep an eye on the police?' - is misleading, potentially attractive to the wrong applicant and potentially offensive to the police
- There is no availability of marketing materials in other languages
- There is no availability of marketing materials for people with visual impairments

#### **5.7.14 Scheme Evaluation**

- Performance evaluation and monitoring information is not assessed in a structured manner, not publicized and not used to improve performance
- Only 3 panels submitted annual reports to MPA scheme administrator last year
- MPA does not include independent custody visiting within its annual report.

#### **5.7.15 Feedback to independent custody visitors**

- Scheme administrators and police staff need more structured ways of feeding back on performance
- Independent custody visitors do not want formal appraisal systems - they find them intimidating
- There is a requirement on the MPA to review performance.

#### **5.7.16 Finance**

- There is a need to invest £75,000 in an improvement programme and to enhance training for all involved
- in the process
- The current total annual budget is sufficient to cover a basic comprehensive service if deployed strategically
- The current local bidding process by panels is arbitrary and ineffective

- The late or non payment of expenses by MPA undermines volunteer and panel secretary motivation.

#### **5.7.17 Information and Communication Technology**

- There is no central database that stores appropriate personal application details.
- There is no central means of communication with independent custody visitors
- Lack of use of ICT for scheme management, performance management, benchmarking and communication.