

Following the excitement of the conference, the work of Panels still goes on:

Closed Circuit TV in custody suites

This system has been in operation in MPS custody suites since the early 1990s and there is comprehensive guidance available to custody managers and staff covering its use and operation. The Codes of Practice require that notices should be displayed in the custody area indicating that cameras are in use. This is particularly important in relation to the cells for detainees considered a danger to themselves and ICVs should draw this to the attention of the custody manager where such notices are not clearly in evidence.

Policing and Mental Health

The MPA Review Unit is currently undertaking a major scrutiny into policing and mental health issues. The scrutiny panel is being jointly chaired by the MPA and health service managers and the work of the panel is being supported by a reference group comprising police, health service professionals and user groups. The work of the scrutiny panel will continue throughout the next few months and the final report will be delivered to the Authority by September 2005. Siobhan Coldwell, the scrutiny manager will shortly be writing to all Panels to outline how ICVs can be involved in the consultation.

The London ICV Conference took place on Saturday 12 February at Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BD.

The conference was extremely well attended with almost 200 people present. There was a buzz of optimism in the air, that at last things are going to move forward and an improved independent custody visiting scheme will take shape. There were delegates present from every Panel in London. Some Panels had sent up to ten of their members. There were also MPA members and staff, officers from the new MPS Custody Directorate along with a large number of borough custody managers. Representatives from the Home Office, the IPCC and guests from the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) helped set the scene for an extremely positive event.

The picture below gives a flavour of the day. The conference took place in a very well appointed venue, filled almost to capacity and the reports we received were that delegates enjoyed the food as well.

[Thanks to Peter Ward, Camden Administrator for the photographs.]



Catherine Crawford, the Clerk to the Authority, in her opening remarks to the conference, stressed the commitment of the MPA to improving the operation and management of the ICV scheme.

Aneeta Prem, the MPA lead member for independent custody visiting outlined her commitment to working with independent custody visitors and the Custody Directorate to developing a scheme which is compliant with the Authority's statutory responsibility and acknowledged the important role played by such a large body of volunteers.



Reshard Auladin, the Deputy Chair of the Authority spoke of his appreciation of the work of the volunteers and in particular he spoke of the status of ICVs as independent members of the community working collaboratively within an MPA framework to carry out their role of safeguarding the welfare of detainees.

We are indebted to **Nicholas Ward**, President of ICVA who played a key role in expertly chairing the event. He ensured that the discussion of the review of the ICV scheme as well presenting an informative and challenging programme for all the delegates went smoothly.



Ian Smith presented the findings of his review of the management of the ICV scheme in London. Some of his conclusions made difficult hearing for the Authority and his proposals for the way forward will need further consultation and development.



Commander Alf Hitchcock gave an interesting presentation on the work of the new MPS Custody Directorate, which was very well received. The new Directorate has at its core the development of a custody service providing equality of service to all detainees and other users of custody facilities by improving the quality of the custody 'experience'



The programme for the day was designed to stress the importance of the task of custody visitors and included a challenging keynote speech from **Peter Herbert**, an MPA member and human rights campaigner.

Peter spoke from his experience and knowledge of high profile cases, including deaths in custody, immigration detainees and mental health and policing and set out the context of the work of ICVs as members of the community with a vital role to safeguard the human rights of detainees. His speech provoked many questions from the floor and a very interesting Response Panel discussion including **Alan Brown**, from the Home Office and **Deborah Glass**, the South East Region Commissioner from the IPCC.

The conference provided an opportunity for the MPA to show its appreciation of the work of the independent custody visiting volunteers and to express its commitment to implementing improvements to the ICV scheme. The work of implementing the review of the scheme is getting underway with the establishment of the ICV Programme Board having membership from the MPA, the Custody Directorate and ICVs.

This Conference was the first London-wide independent custody visiting event since the MPA came into existence in 2000. The Authority is committed to making this an annual event.

