



London ICV Newsletter



Chinese Delegation Seeks MPA and ICVs' Advice

Andy Lawrence reports on meeting a delegation from China to talk about the ICV scheme.

It's not often you get invited to meet an official delegation from the Chinese government to talk about protecting the human rights of individuals detained in custody. But that's exactly what happened to Rachel Harper and me in October.

The MPA hosted a group who were visiting the UK to research comparative criminal justice systems and torture prevention mechanisms, led by Prof Chen Weidong of the School of Law, Renmin University of China.

The delegation had specifically asked to talk to the MPA about the Custody Visiting Scheme. The MPA in turn invited Ian Smith from ICVA, Rachel Harper and me to meet the delegation along with Kerry McClelland (ICV Scheme Manager), John Roberts (ICV Lead Member) and David Riddle (MPA Deputy Chief Executive).

I suppose that none of us knew exactly what to expect from this delegation, but we were faced with a dozen officials around the conference table at the MPA.

After a brief introduction by David Riddle and a presentation by Ian Smith on the basics of the Custody Visiting scheme, the delegation began to ask questions about how the scheme worked in



practice. Rachel and I found ourselves very much in the centre of this discussion. Fortunately the pace was slow as all of the questions and answers were translated.

The questions asked of us were of a very perceptive nature. The delegation were clearly focused on the human rights issue and found it difficult to understand how the sort of routine problems that ICVs come across were relevant to that. They had expected us to be involved in detainees cases and to be active in investigating potential human rights abuses by the police, so finding that the most common complaint was about the quality of the food or the lack of a cigarette didn't quite live up to their expectations.

We had some quite challenging questions about the independence of ICVs which focused on the fact that we were appointed by the police authority and were not allowed to become involved in a detainee's case. The group seemed to understand more when we were asked 'who pays your wages'. I'm still not sure that

the concept of a volunteer seeking to be accountable to the public at large got across entirely but there were quite a few nods and smiles as that point became clearer.

It was also quite difficult to get across what happened in a routine visit. Rachel and I did think about doing an impromptu role play (maybe with Ian Smith as the Custody Sergeant and David Riddle as the detainee, but thought better of it since neither of us was sure David could successfully impersonate a drug user!). This visit was clearly not a cosmetic exercise. The delegation were very interested in the potential use of a similar scheme to counter human rights abuses in their own country's context. They very politely suggested they would invite us to China should they want to introduce the scheme there! Now, where is that Mandarin phrase book?

Andy Lawrence
Lewisham ICVP Chair.

Inside this issue:

<i>Safer Restraint</i>	2
<i>Immunisation Information</i>	2
<i>Havering & Redbridge Talk to the Press</i>	3
<i>ICVA National Conference Cambridge 2006</i>	3
<i>Operation Safeguard</i>	4
<i>Scheme Update</i>	4

News In Brief

The ICV Application Form has undergone a revamp to bring it into line with age discrimination legislation as well as to ensure it meets diversity and equality requirements.

In consultation with the MPA's Human Resources Department and Race and Diversity Unit, the form has been rewritten in order to help meet the needs of all users.

It is available online at:
www.mpa.gov.uk/issues/icv/recruit.htm

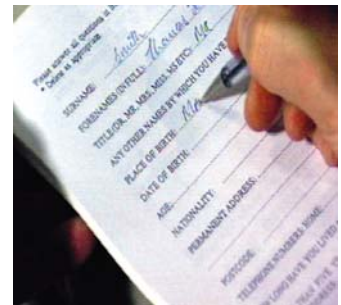


Training Dates 2007

Initial Basic Training: (For new ICVs)

Saturday 27th January
at MPA, 10 Dean Farrar St
SW1H 0NY
10am-5pm

Please contact Jennifer or Emma at the MPA to reserve a place 020 7202 0096/020 7202 0127.



New Visit Report Forms

All panels should now have received and be using the new report forms. Please ensure forms are fully completed and a copy is forwarded to the MPA Co-ordinators.

Rachel Harper Looks at Safer Restraint

The MPS has recently produced a training DVD, for its officers, on the issue of restraint in difficult situations. All officers attend two days a year training in restraint, and although this DVD was made for MPS training purposes, it may be of interest to ICVs.

The details concerning arrest, and any restraint used at the time, is not within the ICV remit. However there are instances where injuries or illness occurs after restraint, whilst in detention and so it can become an area for concern for ICVs at this point.

The DVD the MPS has produced is twenty minutes long and anyone intending to watch it should be aware that there are violent and distressing scenes throughout the film. There are two scenarios shown. The first is of a very powerful, aggressive man upset at being ejected from a nightclub. He is under the influence of alcohol and an extremely high level of illegal drugs. He does not speak or

understand much English. He is menacing members of the public and trying to damage the door of the club. When he starts to attack a street-sweeper the club's security staff come out to restrain him and the police are called. The size and strength of the man, added to the fact that the drugs have inhibited the systems which usually prevent someone from over exerting themselves to the point of self-harm, mean that restraining him is difficult. As police arrive they gradually take over from the security doormen until they are able to put the man in a police van. The man dies. Although it is shown that the restraint has been conducted correctly there are serious issues to be considered. Officers need to understand the medical implications of this kind of situation, and also what should or should not be expected of club door staff. The second scenario in a rundown shopping parade shows a severely disturbed man with schizophrenia who is shouting and banging his head. He is not

committing a crime, but cannot be left in that state and needs help. The police are called but are unable to calm him. Then both a police van and an ambulance arrive. This raises issues of whether he should go in the ambulance with a police escort or in the police van with a medic in attendance, and the question of places of safety for violent people with acute mental health issues.

Panels who would like an opportunity to view this DVD should ask their Panel Inspector if this could be arranged. If it is intended for general discussion, it may be useful to ask whether the Borough Mental Health Officer, or an officer with special knowledge of restraint, could also attend to clarify any points which may be raised.

With thanks to Rachel Harper Chair of Tower Hamlets ICVP for her review of this DVD.

The Risks - Immunisation Information

In response to ICVs raising the issue of immunisation against Hepatitis B, the MPA has sought advice from the MPS's Senior Occupational Physician on this issue.

Ultimately the decision whether or not to seek immunisation is a personal one for individual ICVs to make. The advice received reads:

"As you know, Hepatitis B results from the transfer of the Hepatitis B virus (HBV) in

blood, blood products or body fluids and secretions from an infected person. In an occupational setting such as front-line police work, this can occur as a result of accidental blood-to-blood contact, usually in the course of a physical confrontation or administration of emergency first aid.

The HSE publication 'Blood borne viruses in the workplace, guidance for employers and employees'

which can be found at www.hse.gov.uk/biosafety/information.htm lists occupations including police, fire and rescue as potentially exposed. It goes on to give the following advice on immunisation, 'The need for a worker to be immunised should be determined by the risk assessment.' Although the role of an operational police officer involves a significant risk of accidental blood-to-blood or body fluid

exposure, it is my view that the risk of accidental exposure in the role of a custody visitor is negligible. I do not believe therefore that the risk assessment justifies immunisation of custody visitors against Hepatitis B."

If you require further information please contact Jennifer (020 7202 0096) or Emma (020 7202 0127) at the MPA. Minicom 020 7202 0173.



Havering & Redbridge Talk to the Press

On 9th October 2006 Havering & Redbridge ICV Panel held a press day at Barkingside Police Station. Panel Vice-Chair Amanda-Rose McKimmie and Administrator Alison Maybin spoke with several reporters and photographers about the importance of Custody Visiting and what it involves.

The visit had been arranged with the assistance of Sgt Mandy Otten and PC Clive Yeoman of Redbridge Criminal Justice Unit. Barkingside custody suite is no longer in use and so was an ideal setting for the

press to observe a mock custody visit, take photographs and ask questions about custody visiting.

PC Yeoman played the part of the detainee during the exercise and Mandy Otten the escorting officer.

The event went well with subsequent articles in several local newspapers.

There has been some positive interest in the scheme and Havering & Redbridge panel hope to recruit several new members from the event.

The event was not only for recruitment purposes but also highlighted the need

for the monitoring and scrutiny of the treatment of detainees and the conditions within custody suites to the wider public. Recruitment as a whole has gone well in the past

six months across London, with several successful recruitment campaigns at a local level. The number of centrally received applications and enquiries is also increasing.



ICVA National Conference - Cambridge 2006

This year's Independent Custody Visiting Association conference was held in Cambridge. The conference was jointly hosted by the Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire, and Suffolk Police Authorities. A total of 37 Police Authorities and five Police Boards from all over the UK were represented by some 300 delegates. Twenty ICVs from 19 panels in the London ICV Scheme attended the conference on behalf of the MPA scheme, along with four MPA staff and one Member.

Chairman of ICVA John Littlechild welcomed everyone to the conference on behalf of ICVA, and spoke of the current financial position of the Association.

Other speakers at the conference included Alan Brown, Head of Police

Leadership and Powers Unit at the Home Office, IPCC Commissioner Len Jackson, retired Lieutenant Colonel Freddie Cantrell, Chair of the Independent Monitoring Board at Campsfield House Immigration Removal Centre, and Nick O'Shea who works for Revolving Doors, the UK's only charity dedicated to meeting the needs of people with mental health problems, who have been arrested or imprisoned.

All speakers were well received and gave a good insight into their work. Chief Executive of ICVA, Ian Smith, gave a presentation that identified the "Challenges Facing Independent Custody Visiting".

On the issue of mental health training materials, he informed the conference that he and Nick O'Shea have agreed

to develop a training manual on mental health issues and detainees, and he hoped that the Home Office would fund the publication.

Other challenges identified included a need for ICVs to keep up with recent and frequent changes to the Codes of Practice under PACE, including Code H which deals with suspected anti-terrorist detainees; treatment of illegal immigrants held in police custody; and concerns over 'Operation Safeguard'*. Mr Smith called on ICVs to be vigilant when they visit police custody suites in order to be able to identify the different categories of detainees and the various rights and entitlements available to them. Attending the national conference of the ICVA was a great experience. This is unparalleled to any other gathering within the

ICV family. One has the opportunity of meeting ICVs from all over the UK together with the police officers and staff involved with custody visiting. I take this opportunity to encourage ICVP members to make use of similar opportunities to attend future national conferences. Although it cannot be guaranteed that ICVPs will be allocated a delegate places in future national conferences, it is worthwhile applying for a delegate place whenever the opportunity arises.

With thanks to Patrick Hassan-Morlai, Chair of Harrow ICVP for his conference report, from which extracts have been taken.

*The agreement to use police cells for convicted prisoners, due to population pressure in prisons.

Contacts

Metropolitan Police Authority

10 Dean Farrar Street
London
SW1H 0NY

Phone: 020 7202 0096/ 020 7202 0127

Fax: 020 7202 0200

Minicom 020 7202 0173.

FREEPOST address for report forms, application and vetting Forms:

ICV Co-ordinator
Metropolitan Police Authority
FREEPOST LONI 7808
London
SW1H 0DY

ICVA

PO Box 1053, Colne, BB9 4BL

E-mail: info@icva.org.uk

Operation Safeguard

Operation Safeguard has come into force in London and according to the Custody Directorate this will be for the period 23rd November to 15th December.

The MPS identified three stations in three separate London boroughs, to be used if necessary. The three ICVPs affected were notified of this in advance.

ICVA has recently sent police authorities the Operation Safeguard Operations Manual, for which we produced a 'Points to Note' document and issued it to the affected panels.

Should any other boroughs become affected we will issue the information to them too.

The 'Points to Note' document states that should there be any queries or problems concerning convicted prisoners on visits then ICVs will have access to a full version of the Operation Safeguard Operations Manual at the police station they are visiting.



*To all ICVs and their
families...*

Seasons

Greetings

&

Best Wishes

for a

Prosperous and

Happy

New Year!



Update on Plans for the London ICV Scheme

Work is progressing in developing the new structure and framework for the London ICV Scheme. Four new members of staff have been recruited and it is hoped that they will start towards the end of January. Currently it looks like one Administrator's post may be filled by TUPE transfer to the MPA's employment and we may have one vacancy left to fill. The MPA is already providing full administrative support to Greenwich panel and will be supporting Hillingdon from January 2007. The new team will receive an intensive and thorough training and induction package to support them in their role.

More work is being done on the draft operating structure and ICVs will have the opportunity to comment on this following the Programme Board meeting in December. We are aware that some ICVs are not in favour of the changes that the MPA is proposing, but hope that we have been able to demonstrate that we will listen to ICVs' concerns and welcome your comments. We are committed to strengthening custody visiting in London and a big part of that is providing better support, information and back up to ICVs. The new structure will enable us to do this.

Looking back on the year, it has undoubtedly been a challenging and turbulent time. I am hopeful that in looking forward to 2007, we will be able to focus more on our shared objectives and goals, rather than our differences, and importantly, work together to improve the welfare of detainees in London.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

John Roberts (ICV Lead Member)

Next Issue.....

Please submit articles, pictures, or 'Questions for the Lead Member' by 12th February to Emma or Jennifer at the MPA.

Publication due in March 2007.