



London ICV Newsletter

February 2008

Inside: Bumper Conference Special!

ICV Social Event Review

The ICV social event held on the 12 December at Empress State Building was a great success, building on the previous year's event at the MPA.

The fact that the event was held on the building's 27th floor meant those who attended were able to take in the magnificent, London wide views on what was a clear, crisp evening in West London.

Commander Steve

Bloomfield stood in for Assistant Commissioner Tim Godwin who was unfortunately unable to attend due to illness. Commander Bloomfield passed on AC Godwin's apologies, as well as his best wishes for all those involved in custody visiting across London for the festive season and New Year.

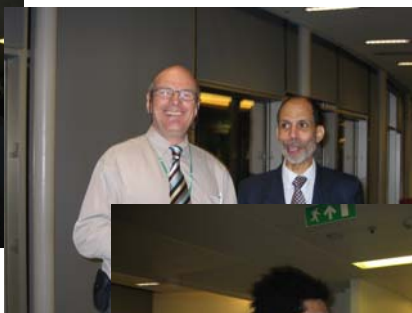
Commander Bloomfield spoke about the progress of the ICV scheme and commended the commitment that

volunteers across London have shown over the past year.

ICVs who attended the event enjoyed the chance to share practice and experiences in an informal, social setting, and have since passed on their comments to the MPA. One panel Chair wrote to say 'how nice it was to be able to relax and to meet with members of our fellow Panels' whilst another Chair said 'the 27th floor of the Empress State Building offered

wonderful views and the food was excellent.'

Lead Member John Roberts thought the event was 'wonderful' and was grateful for the positive feedback received. John also hopes there will be more, similar events for ICVs in the coming year, even suggesting a Quiz Night....so watch this space.



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Conference Report I: Putting it on the Agenda Mr Everett Henry - HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC)

Mr Henry emphasised the importance of putting the role of ICVs on the agenda, as presently many people do not see it as important, despite it being key in working with local communities and the police.

Mr Henry pointed out that society is continually changing, making understanding diversity crucial in addressing complex and different needs, and in order to do this the six strands of diversity need to be taken in to consideration:

1. Age
 2. Race
 3. Disability
 4. Sexual Orientation
 5. Gender
 6. Religion and Belief
- along with issues around detainees' Human Rights.

He went on to state that due to the current pressures on the police service, forces are overstretched and under resourced.

The police receive detainees in to their custody daily who have many needs and

personal issues which need to be taken in to account. Many of these issues are complex and police staff have to deal with whatever situation a person presents them with, from mental health, to alcohol and drugs, to language difficulties and many more.

There has been improvement in some police policies and practices, such as the Independent Police Complaints Commission, safer detention guidelines, and protocols with health teams. However, many people still have poor experiences of how they have been treated while they are in custody. Mr Henry stated that ICVs are the eyes and ears that can pick up issues to raise and record appropriately.

ICVs play a key role for police authorities and should be recognised for the work they do.

As ICV panels work within local communities they should be able to represent their community's cultural preferences and

differences and identify ways that cultural issues may impact upon custody visiting processes. Therefore, in recruitment terms, more people from Black and Minority Ethnic, and diverse communities should be encouraged to apply.

Mr Henry went on to state that the benefits ICVs provide include improving standards, representing the community, and developing understanding. This improves communications and in turn increases trust and reduces tension.

He went on to discuss that the next steps for the HMIC was to publicise the role of ICVs to detainees, to increase inspection of custody suites and ensure records are accurate.

In the HMIC inspections due to be carried out in 2008 inspectors will be looking for clear protocols and standards of service, along with contingency planning and how the force monitors this. They will also be looking into how feedback is received from

ICVs and how this is used by the force to develop local strategies.

Further areas to be looked in to are whether there is consultation between the police and ICVs, whether the force protocols have been equality impact assessed and whether there are any systems in place to report racist incidents.

HMIC will also look in to issues such as the hygiene measures for female detainees, language services, the condition of cells and suitable meal/diet provision.

Mr Henry stated that the police can find it a burden to assist ICVs (as well as manage detainees) so closer working relationships between the two parties should be encouraged, in order that they can understand each other's roles fully.

With thanks to Sanchia Smithson of the Newham Panel for her contribution.



STOP PRESS..... LONDON ICV CONFERENCE 26 APRIL 2008

Conference Report 2: Greater Manchester Protocol for ICVs Visiting Terrorism Detainees

Assistant Chief Constable Robert Taylor - Greater Manchester Police

Robert Taylor, Assistant Chief Constable for Greater Manchester Police, and Chairman of the local Criminal Justice Board, introduced the protocol developed in Greater Manchester to enable ICVs to visit high security detainees who have been detained under anti-terrorism legislation. Mr Taylor explained that Greater Manchester has become a regional centre for the detention and interviewing of terrorist suspects.

The number of persons detained under anti-terrorism legislation has increased, and this raises concerns regarding the health and welfare of prisoners held for longer periods in police detention. Greater Manchester police also recognises that these are often high profile detainees and there needs to be transparency to ensure community confidence. In the normal course of visiting, Manchester ICVs were not necessarily encountering high security prisoners. In order to ensure that

prisoners detained under anti-terrorism legislation could benefit from custody visiting, it was determined to set up special arrangements. Following consultation, a protocol was developed to provide a 'practical and proportionate' framework to enable ICVs to carry out such visits. The protocol has established a 'cadre' of 25 custody visitors, from among the more than 80 ICVs in Greater Manchester, who will receive extra training. Custody officers and staff receiving these prisoners will also be given additional training to ensure that custody visiting is seen as an integral part of the detention of terrorist suspects. Under the protocol the custody officer will contact an independent coordinator who will then notify an ICV to arrange a visit.

Security issues were seen as central to the conduct of the visit. ICVs are not allowed to bring in any objects that might pose a risk and during the visit the ICV

remains outside the cell and can only speak to the detained person through the hatch in the cell door. A police officer should be present during the visit, but should stand at a distance.

Taylor reported positive feedback from ICVs and concluded that the scheme was proportionate and necessary. In response to questions, he confirmed that there was no additional security vetting of the ICVs selected to visit detainees held under anti-terrorism laws. ICVs were still normally allowed to view the detention log and if this was not allowed, it should be recorded and an explanation given. One question was raised about how ICVs were reassuring the community of origin of the detainee, since Greater Manchester was a regional centre for questioning and detention, and detainees may have come from across the Midlands and northern England.

The Metropolitan Police

Authority has already put a protocol in place for detainees held under anti-terrorism laws at a high security suite. In contrast with the Greater Manchester protocol, arrangements in London allow ICVs to speak directly with detainees and not through the cell hatch, but visits should be made by appointment.

At present it is only a small number of Westminster ICVs who visit detainees held at the high security Paddington Green station and on occasion Belgravia. This raises the same question about community confidence that was discussed at the national Conference, and whether a more London-wide approach to visiting high security detainees, given the enormous sensitivity surrounding this issue, should be adopted.

With thanks to Nicola Macbean of the Richmond Panel for her contribution.

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Conference Report 3: Mobile Custody Facilities Mr Joe Molloy - Staffordshire Police

Staffordshire Police force introduced Mobile Custody Facilities (MCF) in 1999 at V99 (now known as the V Festival), in Weston Park, Staffordshire. Prior to 1999 they used a far from ideal adapted stable block on site for the festival's detainees.

The V Festival is split between two sites in Chelmsford and Staffordshire, the latter attracting 85/90,000 people, most of whom arrive on Friday and leave on Monday.

There is a need for a MCF as the nearest Police Stations are 11 and 16 miles away and between them they have

only 14 cells.

The MCF started with two redundant prisoner transport vehicles. One vehicle was left with 14 cells whilst the second had 10 cells removed to allow space for: front office, interviews, kitchen, toilet, photographs and fingerprinting. Over time four portacabins and a toilet block were added to the MCF fleet to give Staffordshire Police force all the facilities that are available at police stations, including: CCTV, computers, broadband, NSPIS and drugs testing/analysis.

The MCF is a non designated police station and so detainees that need

to be held for more than 6 hours are transferred to a designated police station. However, most of the detainees are held for drug offences and are processed within 6 hours. At V Festival 2006 there were 83 arrests, this figure dropped to 75 in 2007. The local Independent Custody Visiting Panel visited four times in 2006 and twice in 2007; a visit planned for the Friday night had to be aborted due to the 7 mile traffic jam. The custody visitors were satisfied with the MCF and the way in which detainees were being dealt with.

Although a number of police forces have

developed their own MCF units, Staffordshire Police force has hired out the MCF fleet to other forces for events such as: G8, drink drive campaigns, out of town automatic number plate recognition operations and large sporting/public events.

Staffordshire Police force has recently decommissioned their MCF fleet and are working with an outside contractor on new facilities for 2008.

With thanks to Patrick McHale of the Sutton Panel for this report.



London ICV Delegates (in picture):

Trilok Bhalla (Lewisham), Patrick McHale (Sutton), Alice Evans (Enfield), Ravi Kurup (Merton), Kerry McClelland (MPA), Vassiliki Stavrou (Kensington & Chelsea), Carol Fletcher (Bexley), Nicola Macbean (Richmond), John Roberts (MPA Member), Dayon Haynes (Southwark), Eugenie Smith (Barking & Dagenham), James Tate (MPA), George Fry (MPA), Ian Smith (ICVA) and David Riddle (MPA). Not in the picture but at the conference: Swarn Riat (Bromley), Spencer Pawson (Islington) and Sanchia Smithson (Newham).

Thanks to Helen Schofield for the photograph.



Conference Report 4: Raising Standards-Raising Status Mr Neil Curtis - Home Office Policing Powers and Protection Unit

Neil Curtis used his presentation to focus on key developments, the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) Review and changes to community engagement in custody. He said that police forces were making progress in implementing safer detention guidance and that a national standards package for National Healthcare professionals working in police custody had been commissioned by the Home Office.

In 2008 a government strategy called 'Improving Health, Managing Offenders' will be launched in conjunction with the Department of Health. At the heart of this strategy lies the engagement of the NHS in the commissioning and delivery of healthcare in and around the police station. A 3-month consultation on the strategy will take place.

Neil also spoke about the setting up of a high level group looking at preventing deaths in custody; its aim was to learn from experience found on the front line such as risk assessment information. He said that advances in technology were key to making improvements.

In the second part of Neil's presentation he talked about consultation on proposals to amend some of the provisions of PACE. He said that

there was an appetite for change, and that the consultation, first started in March 2007, had produced over 700 suggestions. After some initial results were published last year, more detailed proposals are now being developed; these will be presented to ministers before being circulated more widely. These more detailed proposals will concern street powers and safeguards, entry, and search and seizure rights, together with safeguards in the taking and retaining of biometric information. The proposals will also cover such things as the detention clock, the use of Appropriate Adults (AAs) and translation services, the provision of meals, and providing access to Forensic Medical Examiners (FMEs) and solicitors. The overall aim of the proposals is to reduce time in custody while retaining the necessary safeguards for both detainees and the investigative process. He said that there was concern that there should be a balanced approach regarding detainees' rights versus police powers and that there should be no disincentive for people to exercise their rights.

In a similar context Neil also talked about short-term detention facilities where there were high volumes of low-level crime e.g. in shopping centres. Here, detainees may be held for between 2 and 4 hours allowing enough time

to establish their identity, and enable the police to return to front line-duties more rapidly. He said that the community can still play a role i.e. in independent custody visiting and providing AAs. He said that putting police stations nearer to the problem reduced custody time and therefore risk.

Neil talked about how independent custody visiting brings a whole new level of accountability and builds trust in the police, acknowledging ICVs importance in maintaining community confidence. Neil said ICV voices should be heard, as this buttresses police accountability. He discussed the fact that many of the bodies representing custody visiting worked too much in isolation; he suggested that in the future there may be a role for a national secretariat of expertise in training and national standards, allowing police authorities to concentrate more on delivery.

He said it was important that the PACE Codes are easy to understand for everybody and that making the Codes more accessible was very important. The Home Office is working with the publishers (TSO) to develop prototypes of the Codes in different formats, to help increase accessibility and understanding. Neil also

flagged that amended PACE Codes were due to be introduced in early 2008. The revised Codes would enable the piloting of new technologies for information sharing within the Criminal Justice System, as well as others like the Criminal Defence Service Direct scheme (providing non-means tested legal advice) which has initially been piloted in three force areas, and will hopefully then be rolled out across all forces in England and Wales after 21 April 2008.

Neil stressed that custody is an important area and there is a lot of work underway to improve standards and delivery, increase confidence and reduce adverse incidents and deaths in custody. He highlighted the important role ICVs have and welcomed ICV's views as the Home Office look to work with others to see how best they could support the delivery of ICV services.

With thanks to Vassiliki Stavrou of Kensington & Chelsea ICVP for her help with this article.

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Training Dates 2008**Initial Training:**

Tuesdays 12 & 19 February
At the MPA Offices
6-9pm (Both evenings to be attended)

Saturday 12 April
At: New Scotland Yard
10am-5pm

Mondays 21 & 28 April
At the MPA Offices
6-9pm (Both evenings to be attended)

Refresher Training:

Wednesday 20 February
At The Irish Centre, Hammersmith.
For: Brent, Ealing, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hammersmith & Fulham, Hounslow, Kingston, Richmond and Wandsworth.

Please contact your panel Coordinator for a place.

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Borough-Based Custody Update

The MPS Custody Directorate is managing a major project to replace outmoded custody suites with new improved facilities in each borough. Progress on the initial seven sites selected is as follows: **Waltham Forest** – the site at Leyton is a new build custody centre. The local consultation was very successful and a final planning decision is expected in March 2008. Approval to appoint a contractor was received from the MPA in November; this means detailed design work can be started followed by a building start in 2008. **Merton** – as with the Leyton scheme, approval was given by the MPA in November. Detailed design begins this month, with a new patrol base needing to be built before the custody project can be started. **Hillingdon** – it is proposed that a combined new patrol base and custody unit be built at a site in Hayes; planning approval has yet to be sought. **Greenwich** – a new site has been identified but awaits a full planning application result. **Haringey** – planning for the new custody suite has involved accommodating recommendations from a local design review panel as far as possible. A planning application has now been submitted. **Richmond/Kingston** – the scheme for Teddington has been re-visited in light of the views of local residents and others and has been discontinued. No other suitable solution has been identified thus far. **Barking and Dagenham** – a site at Freshwharf has had planning permission granted and the shell construction is being completed by an independent contractor prior to the MPS taking it over and fitting it out as a custody suite.

