

The logo for the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) features the letters 'MPA' in a stylized, teal-colored font.

Metropolitan Police Authority

# London ICV Newsletter

December 2008

## ICVA National Conference 2008

Sally Speed, Chair of Richmond ICVP, attended the ICVA National Conference in Stratford upon Avon along with 19 other London ICVs in November. Here she gives a brief overview of the presentations given at the conference.

Ami Badmus and Neil Curtis of the Home Office emphasised the importance of independent custody visiting before talking about the forthcoming initiatives to improve custodial care. These included, working with partners such as the Prison Reform Trust and Mencap to ensure notices of rights and entitlements are appropriate and understood by people with learning difficulties; improved custodial healthcare, with links to the NHS; and reducing the amount of time that people are held in detention.

They also discussed increasing engagement with the community and abandoning some targets for the police, using community confidence as a measure

instead, and then finally the PACE review.

Next to speak was a representative from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons, which has started joint inspections with the HM Inspectorate of Constabulary looking at custody suites. This is a limited programme, that will span a six year inspection cycle, with

inspections taking two days and using multi-disciplinary teams.

Key findings to date, seem to echo those of ICVs' reports and it was noted that the Met do learn lessons quickly. It commented on the gap between management hope and reality; an impressive adherence to PACE; the quality of performance linked to dedicated custody staff. However, they did note that there is a tendency towards risk aversion (e.g. removing toilet paper from cells!); that healthcare is variable across force areas; and that more attention is needed for vulnerable groups, including women.



The final speaker of the morning session was the Chair of the Association of Members of Independent Monitoring Boards – the prisons equivalent of ICVs. This presentation looked at fairness and respect for people in custody. The emerging theme, to me, seemed to be 'how can we learn effective lessons from the other bodies that are looking at custody, and are there ways of achieving a more 'joined up' approach?' The afternoon sessions covered the potential changes to ICVA, the role of the Forensic Medical Examiner and an introduction to the new ICVA training material. A good day was had by all those who attended (as

you can see from the picture above).

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## Paddington Green upgrade

The MPS is embarking on a series of changes to the current long-term detention facilities at Paddington Green police station, used to hold detainees arrested under the Terrorism Act 2000.

The MPS is addressing concerns and issues put forward by external agencies, and anticipates commencing an extensive upgrade of the 8 cells at Paddington Green shortly. This work will hopefully be concluded by May 2009.

Improvements will include visual and audio stimulation for detainees, improved cell furniture and comfortable cell furnishings, upgraded washing facilities and a new

exercise yard.

To ensure the MPS meets the standards that are expected and desired, a number of ICVs and external stakeholders were invited to inspect the facilities at Paddington and observe the current conditions.

During these visits a pre-upgrade questionnaire was given to those attending to capture impressions of the current standards along with their comments on the proposed improvements.

It is hoped that at the conclusion of the MPS project those who attended will assist by revisiting the site, to see if the provisions for detainees held has improved.

## Chairs' training

On Monday 3 November the MPA hosted a training session for ICV Chairs and Vice Chairs focussing on skills and techniques involved in chairing panel meetings. The training was delivered by Peter Tihanyi, an experienced ICV and Chair of Tower Hamlets panel, whose career has included training for Chairs and

Vice Chairs of Carers Centres. Twenty-two Chairs/Vice Chairs attended from 19 panels. The training covered providing leadership; ensuring the objectives of the meeting are fulfilled; purpose of the panel meeting; encouraging the panel to work as a team; looking after members; meeting agendas – content and management; and

controlling the timing of the meeting. Feedback from the training was generally positive and participants welcomed the opportunity to reflect on their own practice. A couple of ICVs who are considering taking on a chairing role at some point in the future also attended and commented that it was 'very interesting' and provided

'a good insight in to the role.' Another session will be organised in the new year for those who were unable to attend in November, as we are keen to encourage all Chairs/Vice Chairs (and those who are considering the role) to participate in the training.

## Chairs' meeting

A meeting of ICV Chairs, Vice-Chairs and the MPA took place on Monday 27 October.

A total of 33 ICV Chairs/Vice Chairs representing 24 different panels attended.

The meeting provided an opportunity to address some of the current issues affecting detainees and custody visitors across London.

Along with the Chairs,

staff from the ICV scheme and Martin Davis, the head of the Engagement and Partnerships Unit, were also present.

Sally Martin, Project Lead for MPS project Herald, gave a presentation on Herald and talked about the roll out of nurses in custody and their duties. She explained that the overall aim of the project is to deliver a more efficient and safer custody

environment by providing medical care for all detainees in custody in London, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Various custody visiting issues were raised by Chairs. A few panels raised concerns regarding the standard of cleaning and the supply of blankets in custody. An update was given on recruitment and training and ICVs were encouraged to

participate in the Home Office review of the PACE Codes of Practice 1984. Chairs from panels participating in the self introduction pilot gave a feedback on how the pilot was going. Updates were also given on the Borough Based Custody Centres and the diversity monitoring exercise.



## Diversity training

The MPA's first diversity training session for ICVs took place in November. In the first instance this was offered to Chairs and Vice Chairs and a second session for those who could not attend will take place early in 2009.

The session was developed and led by David Maguire and Paul Owen from the MPS. David is Head of Diversity Learning and Development Strategy within Organisational Development, part of the Human Resources Directorate in the MPS. Paul has worked for the MPS for 27 years and has an operational policing background. He was involved in police recruit training for several years in the early 1990s where he developed a strong interest in diversity and equality issues.

The course focused on exploring the knowledge and preconceptions of those present, as well as challenging statements around the six strands of diversity: Age, Gender, Faith and Belief, Race, Disability and Sexual Orientation.

As this session was for Chairs and Vice Chairs it also included some work around recruitment and selection in regards to ICV interviews.

Feedback from those present included such comments as 'very well presented' and 'the best training session I have attended.

'Informative, thought provoking and challenging. Thank you'. Some participants felt they would benefit from further training which would enable them to explore the subject in more detail.



## Update from Custody Directorate meetings with the MPA

At the ICV Conference we promised to use the ICV newsletter to provide regular feedback on the issues raised in the meetings between the MPA and the MPS Custody Directorate. Relevant issues and queries regarding custody procedure, process and policy can be brought to the attention of ICV Scheme Manager, Kerry McClelland, through your Coordinator.

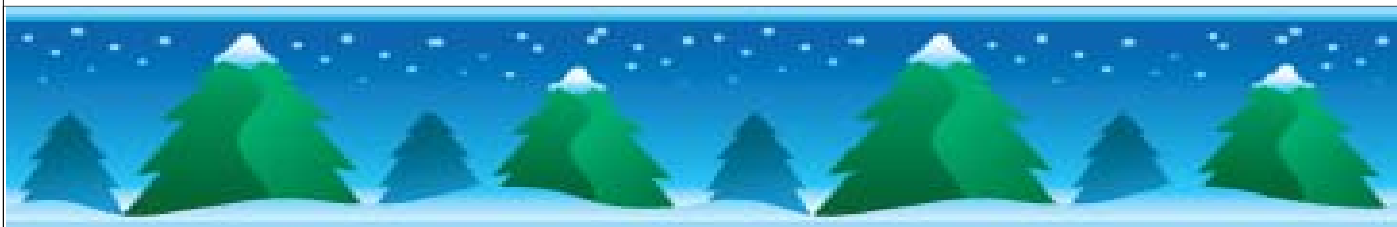
No issues were raised by ICVs in advance of the last meeting. Discussion centred around the future of borough based custody, the Herald Project and recent HM Inspectorates of

Prisons and Constabularies (HMIP/HMIC) inspections. There was a presentation on Herald at the last Chairs meeting on 27 October and hopefully Chairs have fed this back to panel members. Minutes of the meeting, including a copy of the presentation on Herald, will be available shortly.

The impact of the global financial crisis on the borough based custody centre building programme was discussed. This is still being assessed by the MPS, but there will inevitably be an impact and a slow down in relation to existing plans. It is likely the builds that have already received planning approval or are in

the detailed design phase will proceed, but that some developments that are in earlier phases may need to be put on hold. HMIP/HMIC have now conducted 3 joint inspections of custody suites in Southwark, Islington and Hillingdon. To date, the first two of these reports have been published and are available on the HMIC website. These visits were planned and the Custody Directorate was notified in advance. However, HMIP/HMIC also intends to carry out unannounced inspections in 2009. We are not currently aware of any further scheduled inspections in London.

**STOP PRESS!! Pictures from the ICV Christmas social event will be in the next edition of the newsletter, out February 2009.**



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Merry Christmas  
and a Happy New Year

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**Handbook review reminder**

The ICV Handbook was originally distributed in April 2007 and by the time this first review concludes will have been in use for two years. As this is the first review of the Handbook, it is taking place after a relatively short period of usage.

The purpose of the review is to ensure that the ICV Handbook remains current, reflective of best practice in custody visiting, and a useful reference tool for all ICVs.

The ICV Scheme Manager, assisted by the ICV team, will lead the review. All ICVs, whether very new to the scheme or with many years of experience, have the opportunity to contribute to the review if they so wish.

All ICVs received information on the review in September and this included a simple framework for suggested changes.

The closing date is 30 January 2009, giving everyone ample opportunity to participate.

Once the closing date has passed all suggested changes will be considered as part of the review and any adaptations will go through the standard MPA Equality Impact Assessment process.

It is hoped an updated handbook will go to print from April 2009.

For those already in possession of a handbook updated inserts will be circulated when ready.

**Reference group update**

The ICV reference group is used by the MPA to inform the Authority about broader issues within the ICV scheme.

The group is asked for their opinions on a range of issues surrounding the scheme across London.

The group originally consisted of around 20 ICVs (approximately 5% of the current total) with a mix of Chairs, Vice Chairs and other Panel members, both experienced visitors and newer recruits. However, recently a few vacancies have arisen, and we are therefore offering another opportunity to join this group.

So as not to demand too much of people's time, the predominant mechanism for consultation will be email.

If we receive more than the required number, a reserve list will be set up and those on it will be contacted when people choose to leave the group.

We will endeavour to ensure the group has a balanced membership from across the ICV community, bearing in mind that other routes exist to canvass the views of Chairs and Vice Chairs.

Please let your ICV Coordinator know if you are interested in joining.

