



London ICV Newsletter

August 2009

Introducing MPA member Clive Lawton



Becoming a member of the MPA last year plunged me onto a very steep learning curve. But always the enthusiast, I put myself forward as

Chair of the Community Engagement and Citizens' Focus (CECF) Sub-committee, convinced that its areas of concern were critically important. After all, the MPA exists not least to ensure that London's police service is truly a service to its citizens and not merely a 'force' as it was once called.

Fairly early on, I discovered the existence of ICVs. To my shame, I did not know that such a 'force for good' existed, but once I found out about it, it seemed both obvious and essential that it did.

The work that ICVs do across London and the country is an essential part of ensuring that detainees have their rights and dignities respected in that most vulnerable of circumstances.

Your work is done modestly and methodically and the regular possibility of a visit at any custody suite at any time helps to ensure that corners are not cut and (sometimes understandable) impatience does not get translated into injustice.

My impression is that sadly your work is 'under sung'; it's not *unsung* because many talk applaudingly of your important work, but it is certainly not widely enough known.

If the service is not better known we cannot be confident that people of all stripes might know to put themselves forward to participate. I'm sure you won't take it the wrong way if I say that the strength of the ICV scheme is your 'ordinariness'. To be sure it's extraordinary ordinariness, because not every person in London gives voluntarily of their time to help make the world a better place, especially if there appears to be little reward except the satisfaction of the work itself. But what makes your judgements and observations valuable is that you are all 'people like us', regular folk, taking the kind of view that we hope might be focussed on our situation if we were unfortunate enough to be taken into custody.

Furthermore, while we obviously must value the experience that many of you have accumulated, we also need fresh blood to keep reminding us of what this all looks like from 'outside' the system. Any organisation or structure that does not have a fairly regular turnover of personnel and balance between experience and renewal is soon in trouble.

The ICV scheme is ever strengthened by confidence that its numbers are made up of the widest possible cross section of London's population. We all know we're not

there yet but we've all recognised the wisdom of making vigorous efforts to ensure that we move closer and closer to reflecting the population we all serve.

The standardisation and central coordination of the ICV scheme, under the management of the MPA, provides ever growing reassurance for all that the system is consistent and robust. We wouldn't want anyone to be dependent on this or that idiosyncrasy of even the most well-intentioned volunteer. But I warmly applaud the commitment to the greater good that has enabled you all to settle into a regime which gives everyone ever-increasing confidence that each situation will get consistent treatment and equal attention.

I look forward to meeting more and more of you over the coming years and working with you all to improve and extend the scheme, supporting you all in the important work you do for the people of London.

I'm sure you already knew that what you were doing was important work. I hope my words give you reassurance that others recognise that as well and we thank you for it.

Clive A Lawton
MPA independent member and
Chair of the CECF Sub-committee.

Summer social and awards evening

On 4 June the MPA hosted its first Summer Social and Awards evening in conjunction with National Volunteers' Week. The event was well received and hailed a great success.

Awards were given out during the evening by MPA Vice Chair Kit Malthouse. Awards were presented to panels who had completed more than 95% of their visits during 2008 and to ICVs who have volunteered for over 10 years, and there was also a special award presented to a Tower Hamlets ICV who is due to retire in the autumn after more than 14 years on the panel.

Guests enjoyed music from jazz group the Jazzberries, along with canapés and refreshments on what was a balmy summer evening in London.

The awards were the first the MPA had given out to volunteers in recognition of their hard work and this will take place annually from now on.

The full list of award winners:

Most improved panels: Brent (54% to 81%) and Lewisham (46% to 83%).

Panels who carried out over 95% of their visits: Barnet, Enfield, Islington, Richmond, Sutton, Bromley, Ealing, Haringey and Hillingdon.

Special mentions and thanks:

In support of Hackney panel Peter Tihanyi, Jane Fothergill, Madeleine Craggs, Suzette Barry and Amjad Rahi. In support of Camden panel Spencer Pawson, Lidia Erlichman, Helen Schofield, Nick Collier, Niroo Swaffer, Rachel Standing, Jan Tucker and Jackie Hall. In support of Hammersmith & Fulham panel Sally Speed, Joan Benham, Mig Lumley and Melanie Baker.

Carol Fletcher for maintaining panel visit performance in Bexley, despite low membership. Jeannine Andre from Ealing for assisting Kensington & Chelsea and Hillingdon and putting many extra hours into the Ealing panel. Peter Waterhouse from Enfield for assisting Waltham Forest and Kensington & Chelsea panels. Margaret Gubbins and Brenda Rayson from Bromley for assisting with Bexley. Laura Giuliani for assisting South Westminster. Allison Davies, Mandy Hermitage and Liz Carboni for assisting Kensington & Chelsea. Rose Davidson from Lewisham for assisting Southwark. Edward Wilson, Steven Mitchell, Ben Braithwaite, Rickard Jonsson and Vassiliki Stavrou for carrying out extra visits to keep their panels visiting.

Long service awards went to:

Margaret Gubbins (Bromley), Brenda Rayson (Bromley), Suzanne Idehen (Camden), Caroline Berry (Enfield), Leo Duberry (Enfield), Lorna Logan (Enfield), Vivienne

Cox (Hounslow), Meenu Dhiri (Hounslow), Hussein Qureshi (Hounslow), Jackie Hall (Islington), Helen Schofield (Islington), Jane Warwick (Lambeth), Lloyd Leon (Lambeth), Avril Jones (Southwark), Wilmot Roberts (Southwark), Edward Wilson (Westminster - South), Hazel Hislop-Chmiel (Wandsworth), Jean Flavin-Jones (Barking & Dagenham), Evelyn Kennedy (Barnet), Allen Williams (Barnet), Rupert Smith (Brent), Stephen Gennari (Ealing), Venis Olafisoye (Hammersmith & Fulham), Jan Tucker (Islington), Rashid Laher (Kingston), David Plews (Kingston), Angela Filkin (Kingston), Raymond Whitaker (Lambeth), Dayon Haynes (Southwark), Maurice Thomas (Southwark), Suzette Barry (Tower Hamlets) Betty Velji (Wandsworth), and Len Clark (Westminster - North).



Outstanding achievement award: Ian Oppenheim (pictured above with Kit Malthouse) is retiring in the autumn after more than 14 years service to the Tower Hamlets ICV panel.



Pictures from the Summer Social and Awards Evening at City Hall on 4 June 2009



Mayor of Sutton attends panel meeting

The Sutton panel were delighted when the newly appointed Mayor of Sutton, Councillor Margaret Court, attended their panel meeting on 13 July 2009. Despite a very busy schedule the Mayor set aside some of her valuable time to personally congratulate the panel on being awarded one of the best performing panels awards for 2008.

The Sutton panel was one of nine to receive this award at the ICV Summer social on 4 June 2009, having achieved a visit rate of 100% over the last 4 years.

The Mayor of Sutton thanked all panel members past and present for their voluntary service on behalf of Sutton and said "My admiration for those who help and support others going through difficult situations knows no bounds. Custody visiting is not a



Members of Sutton ICV panel and Inspector Stuart Rushworth with Mayor of Sutton, Councillor Margaret Court.

glamorous role but it is vital for ensuring the accountability of the police and building trust between the police and the local community. I am extremely proud of all Sutton's volunteers."

Patrick McHale, Chair of Sutton ICVP

said "It is good to know that the hard work and dedication of the panel is appreciated by the borough's first citizen and we thank the Mayor for taking the time to attend our meeting."



The latest edition of Visiting Times is currently in production with a publication date of September 2009. In consideration of members' wishes ICVA is looking at how this issue and future editions will be distributed. The current situation is that police authorities are provided with hard copies as needed. The cost of printing and distribution are borne 100% by the association. The final document is then added to the association's

Visiting Times magazine and website update

website as a PDF and is available to download by both members and non-members.

Following some debate at the last ICVA executive committee meeting and a brief discussion at the scheme administrators conference, it is now recommended that in future, Visiting Times should be distributed as a PDF version only by email. This would provide significant savings to the Association in terms of print costs, delivery and storage. It also provides authorities with a more modern method of viewing the publication, which is in turn good for the environment.

Authorities will be able to distribute their own copies through email

reducing their own postage costs.

In relation to diaries, it is proposed that the Association continues to provide an annual diary as part of the membership subscription and the savings associated with Visiting Times will enable this.

In regards to the ICVA website members of the ICVA executive committee agreed that it was important to ensure it was updated regularly. The ICVA Chief Executive agreed an audit should be undertaken of the current site with a view to identifying priority areas for improvement.

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Awareness raising

The number of ICVs in London has increased over the past two years to a satisfactory number, and as such the team's emphasis has shifted from recruitment to awareness raising. The ICV team recognises that knowledge of the scheme is a crucial aspect in improving community confidence in policing and are developing an awareness raising strategy.

This began by identifying stakeholders and seeking their opinions about how to go about raising awareness, where we might do this and how to communicate with specific groups. This important first step will assist us in formulating a robust strategy which we hope to implement over the coming years.

Help inform London's Policing Plan

This year's public consultation to inform the Policing London Business Plan has now started. The questionnaire is available online at:

www.mpa.gov.uk/publications/policingplans

Respondents can also request a paper copy (in a variety of font sizes) or a telephone questionnaire by calling 020 7202 0063 or 020 7202 0173 (minicom) and leaving their name and contact details.

The consultation closes on 30 November 2009.

Training & meetings

Initial training:

Monday evenings 7 & 14 September
6-9pm at the MPA

Chairs meeting:

Monday 19 October
6.30-9pm at the MPA

Virtual court roll out

Back in July 2007 we told you about a 12 week virtual court pilot which was trialled in Lambeth and Southwark. The pilot project was deemed successful and it has been rolled out at several police stations across south London.

Since early March Charing Cross, Bexleyheath, Croydon, South Norwood, Plumstead, Walworth, Peckham, Lewisham, Paddington and Belgravia stations have had equipment installed in custody suite interview rooms.

Over August and September a further five stations will be included and equipment will be installed at Kennington, Streatham, Brixton, Sutton and Bromley.

Magistrates continue to conduct proceedings from the courtroom while the defendant, defence and prosecution participate from specially adapted interview rooms within the stations. Participation in the scheme is currently dependent on the defendants consent. Before making a decision defendants will be provided with literature explaining the process and will be able to discuss participation in a private consultation with their legal representative or lawyer.

The virtual court concept forms an important part of several government projects and supports existing London Criminal Justice Board and Met initiatives including Simple Speedy Summary Justice and Integrated Prosecution Teams.

The roll out of this scheme has little impact on the work of ICVs, but visitors may notice new equipment in interview rooms. Detainees seen may possibly be waiting to go through the process, or may be being held as a remand prisoner if bail was not granted during their hearing. For report form purposes in such instances, the detainee will be deemed as 'Other' under category of detention.