

Independent Custody Visitors

April 2021

On the 24th March 2020, following an announcement by the Prime Minister re Covid-19 and government guidelines, all visits to custody suites were suspended until further notice.

To ensure the OPCC maintained an overview of the work of custody, the OPCC liaised with the custody manager and custody record reviews were undertaken by ICVs.

In October 2020 ICVs returned to face to face visiting and undertook visits to the three main custody suites across the force area, with their findings reported back to the Police and Crime Commissioner, Kim McGuinness.

Below are some of the highlights, issues and other newsworthy information raised during visits or by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner during **April 2021**.

Millbank

Three visits were made to Millbank, the suite was found to be clean and tidy on all occasions. Staff were friendly and helpful.

Food and drink stocks were checked and out of date drinks removed

All cultural and religious items checked and stored correctly.

ICVs noted juvenile in detention who was in the process of being finger printed. They noted that the juvenile had an AA, solicitor and children services in attendance.

ICVs noted that female hygiene packs and dedicated female officers had been assigned to female detainees.

Areas for improvement:

- Lockers and panels open outside cells.
- Out of date tea and coffee identified and removed.
- Food allergy notice missing from detainee kitchen
- Exercise yard in need of cleaning however noted on a subsequent visit that this had been undertaken.
- Strong smell from drainage system in suite

Force Response:

Very pleasing to see the positive areas highlighted including hygiene packs and the storing/use of religious items.

Drainage and issue with the exercise yard have been actioned. Staff reminded about closing panels/lockers and the repercussions of not doing so.

North Tyneside – Middle Engine Lane

One visit was undertaken to Middle Engine Lane, the overall cleanliness of the suite was very good and all staff were polite and helpful.

All food and drink stocks checked and out of date drinks identified and removed.

ICVs noted that legal representation was being provided in person to detainees.

Exercise yard checked and in good order.

Areas for Improvement:

- Out of date detainee drinks identified and removed.
- Short of blankets due to bank holiday weekend and the delay in delivery of clean stock.

Force Response:

Out of date drinks rectified at the time of the visit, staff at all hubs reminded to check food/drink products periodically.

Understandable issue regarding the lack of blankets over the Bank Holiday weekend. Demand was at its peak and this will be taken into consideration when items are restocked. Staff to be reminded that resilience suites will also be stocked and items can be taken from these suites to the other hubs.

Forth Banks

Two visit was undertaken to Forth Banks where staff were polite and friendly, the overall cleanliness of the suite was good however some litter on cell floors was noted.

ICVs noted detainees been offered showering facilities.

SGT 3345 was very helpful and responsive to points raised during the visit.

Areas for Improvement:

- Detainee lockers open.

- Some litter on cell floors noted.
- Out of date tea and coffee identified and removed
- 29.05.21 visit – 11:10am = Several detainees reported cell call buzzers not being answered.
- Cell 42 – out of order due to broken intercom
- Cracking plaster on walls outside cells 1 – 10 (near detainee kitchen)

Force Response:

The suite was at full capacity 29/05/21 therefore the demand on staff was very high, this may explain the litter and call buzzer issues. It is always the intention to clean cells and answer cell calls as soon as possible. However on occasion demand is such that there is a delay.

Cell 42 broken intercoms will be fixed as part of the system upgrade within the next few weeks. Cracking plaster reported.