



Northumbria OPCC

Return of Face to Face Visiting



**NORTHUMBRIA  
POLICE & CRIME  
COMMISSIONER**



## Standard Operating Procedures - Protecting our ICVs during Coronavirus (Covid-19)

### Introduction

These are exceptional times and OPCCs and Northumbria Police must comply with the latest Government advice on Coronavirus (Covid-19) at all times. These Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) are designed specifically for Northumbria OPCC volunteers.

We rely on everyone working or volunteering for the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to take responsibility for their actions and behaviours. Remember if you have any concerns or feel that we have missed anything from this guidance or have heard of other ways that custody suites have made themselves Covid Secure we want to hear.

**Above all remember that your health and safety is our primary concern so do not feel pressured at all into doing anything that makes you uncomfortable or raises concern.**

1. This guidance is designed to support Independent Custody Visitors wishing to return to face to face visiting, but only when it is safe for them to do so. It is acknowledged that some ICVs will still be unable to visit custody suites at present, due to their own or others' vulnerability or age. *There is no requirement for ICVs to undertake visits.*
2. At all times ICVs who choose to visit custody suites should adhere to public health advice and to the 'do no harm' principle and should comply with any infection control measures in place in the custody suite. This guidance sets out key processes that should be followed and actions that should be taken when visiting custody suites, in order to reduce risks to themselves, their household, police officers, police staff and detainees. **(See also Appendix 2, Covid Guidance)**
3. The main issues to consider before returning to direct monitoring include:
  - health and wellbeing of ICVs
  - current infection rates in the community
  - method of transport to the establishment
  - areas to be visited within the police station

### **Rationale for considering resuming to face to face visits.**

4. The World Health Organisation is explicit about the importance of oversight and independent scrutiny during the pandemic:

*"The COVID-19 outbreak must not be used as a justification for objecting to external inspection of prisons and other places of detention by independent international or national bodies whose mandate is to prevent torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment"*

*or punishment; such bodies include national preventive mechanisms under the Optional Protocol to the Convention against torture”.*

5. However, as stated above, no ICV should feel obliged to monitor face to face. ICVs welfare and wellbeing, and that of their families, is always our main consideration. The decision about whether to visit the establishment remains with the individual member, see point 6 for exclusions.
6. **Exclusions:** Those ICVs who are over 70 years old or classified as more vulnerable to severe illness as a result of COVID-19 and/or who have recognised medical conditions should not make visits to custody suites. This also applies if ICVs have vulnerable family or household members. Some ICVs may also need to prioritise caring or childcare responsibilities, or to support COVID responses in the community, and may have limited time for undertaking visits. The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner will continue to monitor the reasons for exclusions on a monthly basis.
7. **Frequency of visiting:** The OPCC would ask, where possible face to face visits take place at each of the custody suites at least once a month.
8. **ICVs with symptoms:** members may contract the virus in the community. After seeking appropriate medical advice, ICVs must report any clinical signs of infection to the scheme manager, Dean Lowery and must undergo an appropriate length of self-isolation prior to returning to monitoring in line with government and NHS advice. ICVs must also self-isolate if anyone in their household experiences symptoms or if they believe they have been exposed to anyone else who has.
9. **Contact Tracing:** if a member who has visited a custody suite receives a laboratory confirmed positive COVID-19 test result, they should immediately notify the scheme manager. If appropriate, track and trace will then be initiated by Northumbria Police.
10. Upon arrival at a custody suite, ICVs should ask for an update before entering and should consult with the custody suite Inspector to understand whether there are any significant current health risks, and must follow Northumbria Police guidance and processes for infection control (**See Appendix 1**). However, the decision to enter the establishment remains a matter for each individual custody visitor, and visitors should read the guidance before assessing their own situation.
11. If a confirmed COVID-19 case is reported during a visit, the presumption should be that the visit will cease and the ICV will inform the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

#### **Travelling to and from establishments**

12. **Using your own car:** Using public transport presents additional risk of infection. Members are strongly encouraged to reduce this risk by using their own cars or private transport. Due to the current circumstances, members should not carry passengers. If sharing cars is unavoidable, a single passenger can be carried for a short journey with appropriate social distancing and face coverings used.
13. **Taxis:** if it is not possible to drive, ICVs should use taxis to visit the custody suite. Where possible, taxis with screens between driver and passenger should be used to reduce the risk of infection. Please contact the scheme manager for more guidance in the first instance.

## Reducing transmission of the COVID-19 virus

14. ICVs should follow the usual Public Health England advice on personal hygiene:

**Washing hands:** members should wash their hands frequently and for at least 20 seconds. They should do this upon arrival at the custody suite, immediately upon arrival back at home, and frequently during the visit. Members should be aware that keys, locks, gates, railings and door handles are a high-risk contamination point. Members should avoid touching their face after making contact with these surfaces and follow this practical guide on hand washing.

**Hand sanitiser:** all ICVs should use hand sanitiser which is available in all custody suites. ICVs may also take their own hand sanitiser if they wish. The cost of this can be reclaimed through 'other expenses'. Likewise, the PPE equipment which is provided in every custody suite should be used during every visit.

15. **Bringing items into an establishment:** ICVs should limit the items they bring into a custody suite. Notepads should not be placed on surfaces, and pens should remain in the ICVs possession and not placed in the mouth. Until further notice, the OPCC would like ICVs to complete only the white copy of the CV3 form, this should then be scanned and sent by email to [Janice.phalp@northumbria-pcc.gov.uk](mailto:Janice.phalp@northumbria-pcc.gov.uk). ICVs will not be required to complete the additional questionnaire forms, however if possible the questions included should still be asked by ICVs in their discussions with detainees.
16. Please note there is a difference between face coverings, which if needed can be used, and face masks, which form part of PPE. This guidance relates to face coverings and further government guidance is provided here

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/public-advised-to-cover-faces-in-enclosed-spaces>

Face coverings are not deemed to be personal protective equipment and should only be seen as a low level method of limiting the transmission of infection. ICVs can source their own face coverings and reclaim expenses via "other expenses" up to a value of £10.00.

Please can ICVs be aware that face coverings can cause significant difficulties for people who are hard of hearing or rely on lip reading.

PPE equipment is also available in every custody suite and should be utilised by every ICV.

**Detainees** – All ICVs should adhere to the 2m rule when speaking to detainees. Ideally questions should be asked from the cell door when the detainee is 2m or more away. When in the 'booking in area', corridors and other busy areas it is advised that ICVs wear a face covering

ICVs should always be very vigilant about social distancing, not least because of the risks they may pose to those within the establishment, as well as the other way round.

17. **Kitchens and store areas.** ICVs should not touch equipment or food in these areas. Covid-19 can live on surfaces, to prevent possible spreading of the virus a visual check should only be undertaken in these areas.

18. **Social distancing:** members are expected to maintain **two metres of social distance** from others whilst monitoring. Some landings or corridors are less than two metres in width and members should consider this when moving around the custody suite, making every effort to plan a route which enables them to maintain distance from others. When using narrow corridors and going through doors / gates, ICVs should give way to others and avoid these areas during organised movements such as changeover of shifts etc
19. **Custody Suite cleaning:** All areas have seen a marked increase in cleaning throughout the day and night. Cleaning stations are provided throughout the custody suite, so if an ICV needs to use a table / chair please ensure you use the cleaning facilities before and after using the desk / chair. ICVs may also wish to take in their own antiseptic wipes, the cost of which can be claimed through expenses (up to a value of £3.00) (The wipes may prove useful particularly when members return to their car).

The preference of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner is for ICVs to complete administrative tasks at home rather than use shared desk space and IT equipment in custody suites.

20. **Visiting a cell.** ICVs should be careful when entering areas where air flow is limited, such as small offices and cells. They should talk to staff in open spaces where possible and whilst observing social distance. ICVs should not talk to prisoners/detainees through the gaps in cell doors as air flows can be directed to either person's face. If they wish to speak to a detainee directly, it is advised that this is done with the door open and standing at least two metres apart, even if this means confidentiality is compromised; or alternatively asking for the detainee to be moved to a suitable alternative space.
21. **Checking of Custody Records.** If a detainee gives consent to view their custody record and ICVs need to clarify information, a request should be made to custody staff to show ICVs the relevant information within the record.
22. **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** There are various kinds of PPE, from simple face coverings, through medical masks, to full protective clothing. As stated above, members should not place themselves in a situation where they would require either of the last two, both for their own safety and also so as not to deplete supplies in the establishment. PPE is provided for all ICV in all custody suites.
23. When an ICV agrees to undertake face to face visits, before undertaking a visit it is recommended that the ICV arranges to meet with the Custody Sergeant to get an overview of the changes since March 2020, this will also provide an opportunity to ask any questions.

**The majority of the above information has been taken from the IMB (Independent Monitoring Boards) health and Safety guidance for direct monitoring during the Covid-19 outbreak. Issued 17<sup>th</sup> June and amended 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2020. Information has also been included directly by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria.**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ confirm that I have read the above and am happy to undertake face to face visits within custody suites. I will adhere to all safety instructions as directed by Northumbria Police during my time within the Custody Suite.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Dated:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Additional guidance

Government guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>

NHS guidance: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

## Northumbria Police Welfare Policy For Visitors to Custody Suites

On arrival at a police station, all visitors will be asked screening questions relating to any contact with persons who may have been exposed to COVID-19, or if they are experiencing any symptoms. The same questions are asked of all visitors to custody to minimise the risk of anyone who potentially has the virus from entering the custody environment.

If waiting at a front office (please note our revised opening times shown overleaf), we will ensure that the wait is for the minimal amount of time and that you be admitted to the custody suite as without undue delay.

Once in the custody suite, hand sanitiser is available and should be on display in prominent places. If it is not, please ask (we are currently attempting to source wall mounted sanitiser dispensers, but are experiencing delays with the suppliers). Handwashing facilities are also available and can be used as and when required.

Surfaces and equipment are regularly wiped down with appropriate grade cleaning wipes. If you are required to use equipment in the suite, please ask for wipes and they will be provided. All visitors are asked to follow social distancing guidance wherever possible.

You will be informed if any specific COVID-19 precautions are being taken in respect of the detainee you are representing. If staff are utilising any Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in respect of the detainee or in the location that you are present in, you will be provided with the same level of PPE as the police staff.

Healthcare Professionals are present in all of our operational custody suites 24 hours a day and are on hand to provide custody staff with appropriate healthcare advice.

Northumbria Police are following NPCC advice in relation to occasions where a suspect interview may not be required, or a virtual or partial virtual interview may be appropriate. Posters with this guidance are on prominent display in our custody suites. We are currently sourcing IT solutions to enable hardwired internet connections within our interview rooms to allow for 'Live Link' video interviews to take place.

However, there may be times where a traditional interview is required to take place. The force interview advisor has produced guidance for officers to ensure that the interview process is as streamlined as possible. Officers should consider during pre-interview disclosure and professional conversations with legal representatives and appropriate adults the safest way of obtaining the suspects account.

All Interview rooms at Middle Engine Lane and Forth Banks can be reconfigured to allow minimum two metre spacing between all persons in accordance with Government social distancing guidance.

Interview Rooms 2, 3 and 5 at South Shields are of sufficient size – ONLY these interview rooms should be used for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Interviewing officers are responsible for ensuring that surfaces in interview rooms are appropriately wiped down before and after interview. PPE provisions are available during interview. If you have not been offered PPE, please just ask.

All staff in our custody suites follow detailed guidance which is given to them via a COVID-19 'action card'. This is refreshed as advice and guidance changes and contains the most up to date advice in relation to cleanliness and cleaning of the suite, personal hygiene, PPE, social distancing, precautions to be taken when dealing with persons suspected of having COVID-19 and escalation procedures to follow when issues are encountered.

If any visitor has any concerns regarding health and safety or welfare of any person in the custody suite, they are encouraged to raise this with the custody sergeant. If the matter is not resolved to their satisfaction, then they may escalate the concern to the duty custody inspector.

I hope that the information above provides reassurance to all visitors who attend our custody suites that we take their welfare, and that of our detainees, and staff extremely seriously. We sincerely appreciate your support during these challenging times.

Yours Sincerely,



CHIEF INSPECTOR 7531 PHIL MCCONVILLE  
FORCE CUSTODY UNIT  
FORTH BANKS POLICE STATION.

[philip.mcconville.7531@northumbria.pnn.police.uk](mailto:philip.mcconville.7531@northumbria.pnn.police.uk)



# Guidance for return to custody visiting (COVID-19)

September 2020



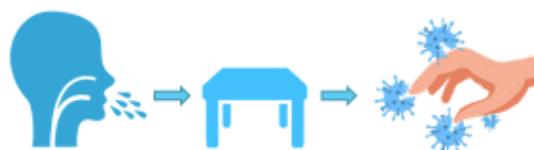
KIM MCGUINNESS  
NORTHUMBRIA  
POLICE & CRIME  
COMMISSIONER

violence  
reduction  
unit

## COVID-19

Covid 19 is an infectious disease which can be spread from person to person through small droplets (from the nose or mouth) through coughing or exhaling

These droplets land on surfaces and objects and are spread to others by touching these surfaces then touching their eyes, nose or mouth



## SYMPTOMS

The main symptoms of Covid-19 are:

- ▶ **a high temperature** - this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- ▶ **a new, continuous cough** - this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- ▶ **a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste** - this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

Most people with coronavirus have at least 1 of these symptoms.



## WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE SYMPTOMS

- ▶ **Stay at home (self-isolate)** - do not leave your home or have visitors. Anyone you live with, and anyone in your support bubble, must also self-isolate.
- ▶ **Get a test** - get a test to check if you have coronavirus as soon as possible. Anyone you live with, and anyone in your support bubble, should also get a test if they have symptoms.



## VULNERABLE GROUPS

Coronavirus (COVID-19) can make anyone seriously ill. But for some people, the risk is higher.

There are 2 levels of higher risk:

- **high risk** (clinically extremely vulnerable)
- **moderate risk** (clinically vulnerable)

### High Risk

(clinically extremely vulnerable)

- have had an organ transplant
- are having chemotherapy or antibody treatment for cancer, including immunotherapy
- are having an intense course of radiotherapy (radical radiotherapy) for lung cancer
- are having targeted cancer treatments that can affect the immune system (such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors)
- have blood or bone marrow cancer (such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma)
- have had a bone marrow or stem cell transplant in the past 6 months, or are still taking immunosuppressant medicine
- have been told by a doctor they have a severe lung condition (such as cystic fibrosis, severe asthma or severe COPD)
- have a condition that means they have a very high risk of getting infections (such as SCID or sickle cell)
- are taking medicine that makes them much more likely to get infections (such as high doses of steroids or immunosuppressant medicine)
- have a serious heart condition and are pregnant

### Moderate Risk

(clinically vulnerable)

- are 70 or older
- have a lung condition that's not severe (such as asthma, COPD, emphysema or bronchitis)
- have heart disease (such as heart failure)
- have diabetes
- have chronic kidney disease
- have liver disease (such as hepatitis)
- have a condition affecting the brain or nerves (such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis or cerebral palsy)
- have a condition that means they have a high risk of getting infections
- are taking medicine that can affect the immune system (such as low doses of steroids)
- are very obese (a BMI of 40 or above)
- are pregnant

## GUIDANCE TO STOP THE SPREAD

- ▶ keep to two metres at all times *where possible*, one metre *plus mitigations* if you can't keep to two metres.
- ▶ wash your hands with soap and water often - do this for at least 20 seconds
- ▶ use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- ▶ wash your hands as soon as you get home
- ▶ cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- ▶ put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards
- ▶ If you can, also wear a face covering in places when it's hard to stay away from people



## MEASURES IN CUSTODY

- ▶ ICV Visitors must follow Covid-19 measures in place in custody at all times.
- ▶ Custody sergeants will have authority to correct any ICVs that are believed to not be following correct precautions.
- ▶ Any failure to follow guidance will be reported back to the ICV manager.