

## **Independent Custody Visitors**

### **August 2021**

On the 24<sup>th</sup> 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 **August 2021**.

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### **Southwick**

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

ICVs viewed the distraction items that are currently being piloted in custody suites for use by detainees. Some had been damaged and were in the process of being replaced.

Some detainees who had been in custody for shorter periods had not been offered showers or exercise however ICVs noted that those detained for longer periods had been offered these facilities.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- Food and drink stocks were checked with several pots of recently expired porridge out of date and removed.
- Exercise yard in need of cleaning.
- 12.08.21 – detainees had not been offered hygiene packs.
- ICVs highlighted that a bar of soap outside of a cell, due to Covid 19 it was felt that these should be disposed of after single use.
- 22.08.21 4:15pm – No female detention officers on shift therefore no dedicated female officer assigned to female detainees.

### **Force Response:**

Exercise yard is now clean and tidy. Resourcing can be quite frustrating as more often than not staff can call in sick with very little notice given, especially in the current climate with covid. It is always best practice to have at least 1 female detention officer at each of the suites, I'm not aware of the circumstances on this occasion but will ensure this is avoided in future.

All the other AFI's (including soap issue) will be added to the custody circular as a reminder for staff.

### **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.

There were no issues to raise apart from three cells out of order due to broken doors as referenced below.

### **Areas for Improvement:**

- Cells 11, 36, 37 are out of order with repairs having been requested.

### **Force Response:**

Good to hear that no issues other than cell maintenance, all have now been repaired and back on line.

### **Newcastle - Forth Banks**

Two visits were undertaken to Forth Banks, the overall cleanliness of the suite on most occasions was good and all staff were polite and helpful.

ICVs noted prompt contact by custody staff for the attendance of an appropriate adult.

All food stocks checked and in order.

ICVs thanked DO 5392 and Sgt 8768 for their assistance during a visits.

ICVs also noted that detainees had been provided with reading materials.

ICVs also noted that a detainee had commented on the dignity shown by custody staff I allowing him to remain in his own clothes. This is positive to note as this was one of the recommendations put forward by HMICFRS Inspectors.

### **Areas for Improvement:**

- Both phone booths within the custody suite were out of order due to damage caused by a detainee. This was however raised at a recent meeting where it was confirmed that both booths were repaired and operational.
- Footlockers open.
- 02.08.21 - Some litter in cells and corridors across the suite.

- Cells 21, 27 and 42 – out of order for maintenance, intercom or fire alarm repairs.

#### **Force Response:**

**Positive responses noted and very pleasing, feedback will be given to staff involved. As stated phone booths now in working order. Cells 21 and 42 back on line, 42 is in hand as contractors will need to repair. As with MEL, common AFI's will be added to custody circular as a reminder for all staff.**