

Independent Custody Visitors

October 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 **October 2021**.

Southwick

Two 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 noted that dedicated female officers had been assigned to those that required them and that female detainees had been offered female hygiene items.

Areas for improvement:

- Interview Room 6 out of order due to recording equipment fault.
- Cell 23 – Hatch fault.
- Exercise Yard still out of use due to a potential ligature point being identified by staff and a birds nest.

Force Response:

Exercise yard now back in use. The hatch for cell 23 will need to be replaced fully, an exact date for fitting has not yet been confirmed by the contractor. This is being progressed by estates department.

IT are aware of the issue regarding the recording equipment and this will be resolved in the next week.

North Tyneside – Middle Engine Lane

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

ICVs commented on the helpfulness of detention officers during their visit.

ICVs checked and positively commented on the availability and storage of cultural and religious items.

ICVs checked all food stores and all in order.

Areas for Improvement:

- Cell 10 out of use due to broken lock, sink and toilet needing repair
- Issue with a delivery of detainee towels resulting in detainees being unable to have showers.

Force Response:

Cell 10 now back on line. Delivery issue has now been rectified.

Forth Banks

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

ICVs commented on the helpfulness of detention officers during their visit.

Areas for Improvement:

- Detainees frequently commenting that toilet role had not been offered to them when entering the cell.
- No detainee towels available due to no delivery being received.
- Detainee kitchen area in need of cleaning.
- Detainee phone box 1 out of order.
- 24.10.21 - Personal belongings on corridor floors, it was noted by ICVs that there was low staffing reported on this day due to staff training.

Force Response:

Delivery issue has now been rectified. Staff reminded of kitchen cleanliness and the phone box is now back on line. Staff shortage noted however there would have been enough staff for the suite to function efficiently.