

Independent Custody Visitors

December 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 **December 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. Food stocks all checked and as stated below there are known delivery issues with a low level of stock.

Areas for improvement:

- Loose bolts removed from a cupboard door outside of cells 12/13
- Some detainees still had to request toilet roll rather than being offered it.
- Detainee shoe lockers open
- Out of date tea and coffee disposed of.
- Food stock issues relating to food supplies (national issue).

Force Response:

All of the above issues digested and relevant feedback will be provided to staff. Shoe lockers and offering toilet roll are a common observation, shoe lockers open can be resolved very simply. However some context needs to be established around the offering of toilet roll. That DP may well have offered toilet roll but this has not been

recorded on the ECR. Staff are continually advised to record every interaction, this will again be reinforced.

North Tyneside – Middle Engine Lane

Two visits were undertaken to Middle Engine Lane, the overall cleanliness of the suite and exercise areas was very good and all staff were polite and helpful. Food stocks checked and all in order.

Areas for Improvement:

- Mattresses and pillows outside of cells.
- Detainee shoe/clothes lockers open

Force Response:

Good to hear all staff polite and friendly, again the issues which have been highlighted are easily remedied with further advice given to staff.

Forth Banks

Three visits were undertaken to Forth Banks, the overall cleanliness of the suite and exercise areas was very good and all staff were polite and helpful. Food stocks checked and issues highlighted below.

ICVs highlighted positively that toilet rolls had been supplied to some detainees but others had stated that they had not been provided.

Areas for Improvement:

- One detainee during visit on 05.12.21 had items of clothing removed when in cell however the reasons for the removal had not been recorded on the detainees custody record (detainee 21-025771)
- Water leak within suite
- Cell 27/48/49 issue with fire alarm
- Cell 25 lock issue
- Cell 46 broken buzzer
- Out of date tea and coffee disposed of
- Detainee spork draw in need of cleaning
- Detainee shoe/clothes lockers open
- Several detainees highlighted that showers had not been offered
- Showers in need of cleaning

Etal Lane (Resilience Suite)

One visit was made to the resilience suite when opened over the Christmas period however there were no detainees in detention. The suite was well stocked in preparation for detainees arriving however some female hygiene packs were out of date. Female cells were also not in use when the visit was made.

Force Response:

I have looked at the ECR relating to the issue highlighted regarding the DP's clothing. The following update was recorded by the Sgt –

“Removal of clothing in line with risk assessment or removed as evidence. Corded clothing removed for his safety as has indicated self-harm in the past.”

I am satisfied that this rationale has been explained.

All maintenance issues have now been rectified.

The offering of showers now forms part of the initial entry the Sgt appends to the custody record when the detainee has been booked in. Therefore compliance will improve in this area. Cleaners are in the suite every day all day and I'm surprised that the shower cleanliness was not what it should be. I will monitor this as well as the cleanliness of the kitchen and speak with custody and cleaning staff.