

Independent Custody Visitors

January 2022

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 **January 2022**.

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 positively highlighted that detainees had been provided with reading materials.

Areas for improvement:

- Detainee lockers open and unlocked.
- Some detainees still had to request toilet roll rather than being offered it.
- Ligature point identified in cell 18 therefore cell out of use.
- Loose bolts removed from electrical cupboard as could be used as a weapon.

Force Response:

Areas for improvement have been disseminated to all staff to raise awareness. Inspector capacity within custody has increased by 100% to raise standards and improve performance. Our Estates Department conduct regular suite inspections to maintain health and Safety compliance. The defect in Cell 18 was identified during a recent inspection, therefore, to ensure prisoner safety it was closed and deemed to be out of order. Estates are arranging an external

company to rectify the defect and the cell will remain closed until safe to be occupied. Loose bolts were identified as a potential hazard, they have been removed and replaced with a secure fitting to remove any risk to detainees and staff.

North Tyneside – Middle Engine Lane

Five 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.

ICVs positively highlighted that where detainee clothes/shoes had been removed this had been correctly recorded on the custody record.

ICV's positively noted that detainees had been offered distraction items.

ICVs positively noted that detainees had been offered reading material and provided with toilet roll in cells.

Areas for Improvement:

- At a visit on 14.01.22 detainee (22/891) had been in close to 24hrs with no shower, exercise or hygiene pack offered.
- Water cabinet and lockers outside of cells open and unlocked.
- Intercom issues in cell 21, 25 and 39.

Force Response:

Areas for improvement have been disseminated to all staff to raise awareness. Inspector capacity within custody has increased by 100% to raise standards and improve individual and team performance. The specific observation regarding a detainees welfare has been shared with individuals involved and there performance is being monitored. Northumbria Police have upgraded their cell bell system, all intercoms issues have been fixed.