

Independent Custody Visitors

February 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 **February 2022**.

Sunderland - Southwick

Four 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 and the provision of female hygiene packs.

ICVs highlighted that where detainees had items of clothing removed this was correctly logged on the ICV record of detainees.

Areas for improvement:

- Low stock of detainee meals which may be related to national supply issues.
- Detainee distraction items had been damaged and in need of replacing. ICVs highlighted the positive use of these items and confirmed that they are a positive addition to custody.
- Cell 18 still out of use due to a ligature point being identified.
- Exercise yard in need of cleaning.
- Some detainees still had to request toilet roll rather than being offered it.

Force Response :

Low stock of detainee meals may be related to a national supply issue, COVID forced a change in the supply chain which we are continuing to review. Stock of distraction items have been replenished. All staff have been made aware of the Areas for Improvement, and understand the importance of complying with the areas identified. The defect in Cell 18 has previously been identified and is awaiting an external company to rectify the defect. The cell will remain out of use, until the repair is completed and it is safe to use the cell. The cleanliness of the exercise yard has been brought to the attention of business support to enforce with the cleaners. A polite reminder has been shared with all staff to give detainees toilet paper if their risk assessment allows.

North Tyneside – Middle Engine Lane

One visit was undertaken to Middle Engine Lane, the overall cleanliness of the suite and exercise areas was very good and all staff were polite and helpful.

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

All exercise yards checked and all in good condition.

Areas for Improvement:

- Cell 14 out of order due to issue with cell call bell.
- Drinking water tap in detainee kitchen broken.
- Several frozen Kosher meals and tea and coffee were out of date and disposed of.

Force Response:

Areas of improvement have been disseminated to all staff, also stocks of food and drink are being managed effectively. The defect to Cell 14 has now been rectified and the cell is now in safe use. The drinking tap in the detainee kitchen has also been fixed.

Newcastle – Forth Banks

One visit was undertaken to Middle Engine Lane, the overall cleanliness of the suite and exercise areas was good and all staff were polite and helpful.

Areas for Improvement:

- Cell 3 fire alarm fault,
- Cell 7 light.
- Cell 27 fire alarm fault.
- Detainee microwave in need of cleaning.
- Detainees had not been offered toilet paper.
- Out of date tea Jan 2022 disposed of.

Force Response:

Areas for improvement have been disseminated to all staff to raise awareness. The issues in relation to cells 3, 7 & 27 have now been addressed, the cells are now safe and in use. Again the rotation of food and drinks are being managed to reduce waste and ensure no out of date stock is retained in kitchen areas. The microwave is cleaned every morning however, a poster to remind detention officers to take more care will be displayed. A polite reminder has been shared with all staff to give detainees toilet paper if their risk assessment allows.