



Independent Custody Visitors March 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 **March 2022**.

Sunderland - 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 where requested had been provided with religious items such as religious texts and prayer mats.

ICVs positively noted that detainees visited had been provided with toilet rolls in their cells, provided with showers and distraction items.

ICVs positively commented on referrals made to support organisations for detainees.

Areas for improvement:

- 06.03.22 (7:30PM) – Shoe and clothes lockers open.
- 06.03.22 (7:30pm) - Low stock of detainee meals which may be related to national supply issues.
- 26.03.22 - Cell M1 Ligature point identified and cell out of use still out of use.
- 26.03.22 – Cell F1 lock broken
- 26.03.22 – Cell M23 VESDA fault
- 26.03.22 - No reading materials available for juveniles.

Force Response:

Very pleasing to see the positives noted by the visitors, a lot of work is going in to providing the best service we can. This is done through regular briefings and the use of the “Custody Circular”.

We are aware of the lack of reading material especially for juveniles. We are getting back to normal in relation to giving out books/magazines after the pandemic. These items will be replenished soon.

The lack of meals is a national issue linked to the supply since Brexit. Again we are aware and using different suppliers to remedy the problem.

The shoe/clothing lockers being open are a regular issue which is being reinforced and monitored by the Custody Insp's.

F1 - lock broken - outside company (NLS) is coming in to service and repair locks on door no date as yet business support and Estates deal with this.
M23 - vesda fault – new vesda fitted by ADT.

North Tyneside – Middle Engine Lane

Four 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.

ICV's positively noted that detainees had been offered distraction items and had been provided with showers.

ICVs positively highlighted that where appropriate detainees had been provided with toilet paper in their cells and hygiene packs.

ICVs positively highlighted that female detainees had been assigned a female officer.

ICVs positively highlighted that where detainee clothes or shoes had been removed, this was recorded on the custody record.

All exercise yards checked and all in good condition.

Areas for Improvement:

- 07.03.22 - Cell 14 out of order due to issue with cell call bell.
- 11.03.22 (5pm) – No Kosher meals available
- 11.03.22 (5pm) – Low food stock supplies
- 26.03.22 – Cell 40 camera out of use
- 26.03.22 – Shower outside cell 15 out of use
- 26.03.22 – Cell 20 out of use due to constant running water
- 26.03.22 – Cell 32 sink broken

Force Response:

Very pleasing to see the positives noted by the visitors, a lot of work is going in to providing the best service we can. This is done through regular briefings and the use of the “Custody Circular”.

The lack of meals is a national issue linked to the supply since Brexit. Again we are aware and using different suppliers to remedy the problem.

We do not keep Kosher meals within the suites as they are very rarely needed. However we have links to the Jewish Community/Elders who not only bring in meals when required but offer advice/guidance to custody staff. The contact details are available at each hub.

Cell 14 – intercom fault – ADT repaired 14/3/22

Cell 40 – camera out of use - SPIE repaired 26/3/22

Cell 20 – constant running water – Mo's repaired 2/4/22

Cell 32 – broken sink – MO's repaired 22/4/22

Shower in corridor 11-20 out of use – MO's repaired 2/4/22

Newcastle – Forth Banks

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

ICVs commented on the assistance provided by officer 4959 during their visit.

ICVs positively noted that detainees had been offered access to support organisations or mental health nurses.

ICVs visited several juvenile detainees where appropriate adults had been contacted and were enroute to provide assistance.

Areas for Improvement:

- 06.03.22 (5:15pm) – Detainee kitchen drawers in need of cleaning
- 06.03.22 (5:15pm) – Water panel doors in corridor 21-30 all open
- 06.03.22 (5:15pm) – Cell 27 out of use due to fire alarm fault
- 06.03.22 (5:15pm) – Detainee (22/4612) had requested shower after being in custody for 48hrs and had still not been provided with this.
- 06.03.22 (5:15pm) – Detainees had not been provided with toilet roll in their cells.

Force Response:

Very pleasing to see the positives noted by the visitors, a lot of work is going in to providing the best service we can. This is done through regular briefings and the use of the "Custody Circular". Feedback to be given to DO 4959 Alderson from their supervision re their assistance.

Further reminders to be given to cleaning staff via their supervision regarding the kitchen draws. However this is not only the responsibility of the cleaners but all custody staff.

Detainee 22/4612 had been informed of a shower/exercise when he was booked in to custody. At no point within the body of the custody record was it noted that he had requested a shower. I cannot see a reason why this would not have been facilitated should the request been made.

Providing toilet roll is not an issue unless the Custody Sgt sees fit to withhold it due to the DP's behaviour or risk level. Again I cannot see why this would have been withheld on their request.

Cell 27 fire alarm fault – repaired ADT

