

## **Independent Custody Visitors**

### **November 2023**

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 **November 2023**.

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#### **Sunderland - Southwick**

Two visits were made to Southwick Custody Suite, the suite was found to be clean and tidy. Staff were also friendly and helpful.

ICVs positively noted that detainees had been provided with toilet roll without asking on most occasions.

ICVs positively noted that detainees had seen the nurse where needed.

Detainee food checked and all in good order.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

Exercise yard door broken and not locking, ICVs noted that this had already been reported to Estates.

#### **Force Response :**

Lock was fixed during November (initial repair (6<sup>th</sup> Nov) broke and so was revisited) NLS completed the work and no further issues reported by staff on daily checks.

Suite is an older property and is having numerous issues with the locks but we are fortunate that NLS are providing a first class service by responding quickly to all requests to review/repair.

#### **Forth Banks - Newcastle**

Four visits were undertaken, the overall cleanliness of the suite and exercise areas was good, and all staff were polite and helpful.

ICVs positively noted that where needed, detainees had received contact with the Mental Health Nurse based within custody.

Exercise yards checked and all in order.

ICVs positively noted that detainees had been provided exercise and the provision of distraction items including a foam ball.

ICVs positively highlighted that hygiene packs were offered.

**Areas for Improvement:**

Out of date drinks removed from detainee kitchen.

Several detainees had not been provided toilet roll without asking for it.

**Force Response:**

Stock items such as food and drinks are listed on the daily check sheets and being monitored by the Custody Performance and Governance team (CP&G).

Old stock was removed and replaced.

We are looking at rotation of stock to ensure older items are used long before expiry and so not left at the back of the cupboard etc.

Following a recent reminder to all team, daily checks are now reporting all stock at Forth bank well in date.

Notwithstanding any risk assessment issues that precludes staff leaving a detainee with a toilet roll on initial entry to their cell, staff have been reminded to ensure toilet rolls are readily available at all times, and if not already in the cell, then very near to hand so no delay in providing on initial entry.

**Middle Engine Lane – North Tyneside**

Two visits were undertaken, the overall cleanliness of the suite and exercise areas was good, and all staff were polite and helpful.

**Areas for Improvement:**

On one visit the suite was short staffed with no available staff to escort visitors therefore visitors only checked the custody suite with no detainees visited (19.11.23 at 2.25pm)

Cell 8 – no water

Cell 36 – alarm fault

Detainee lockers open

**Force Response:**

**Staffing issues:**

D rota were the duty team on that particular day. The suite runs with 5 Detention Officers as a minimum but some days they have what we call an 'Early Finish' which occurs at 1300hrs, if one occurred that day that would take then to four DO's and so might have been the reason, along with break times, for the appearance of 'short staffing'.

Cell 8 / Cell 36: Both these cells have been in use throughout November, on reviewing the daily checks submitted, so management / estates have not been informed of any issues regarding these cells prior to or on the dates of the visits.

Cell 8 might have been in response to a detainee deliberately flooding the cell so as an interim action the water is turned off. The detainees are informed of this form of intervention and monitored, whenever it is taken, and once some form of normality as occurred, the water is returned to the cell. This would be recorded on the custody record for that detainee.

Detainee lockers: I believe this is a regularly reported issue, and staff are reminded to ensure detainees property is placed in the locker and it firmly closed. A reminder will be issues across the suites.