



Independent Custody Visitors

March 2024

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 2024**.

Sunderland – Southwick

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

Detainee food checked and all in good order.

Exercise Yards checked and all in order.

ICVs positively noted that Appropriate Adults had been provided to detainees where required.

ICVs positively noted that distraction items and reading materials were provided to detainees.

Areas for improvement:

- Reception poor for staff phablets
- Extractor in detainee kitchen in need of repair.
- Lack of detainee blankets

Force Response:

- The force has a planned upgrade for Southwick station, which will see an improvement to the custody Wi-Fi scheduled for W/c 13th May.
- Extraction fan – There is no extractor in this room, only the station wide ventilation system outlets, which on checking, are operating correctly. Not aware of any other issues across the station so we will monitor.
- The unit has now instructed the cleaning contractor to divert the South Shields stock to Southwick custody, as the South Shields suite is only a reserve suite. This has seen an increase the blanket stock available for use.

Forth Banks - Newcastle

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

All detainee food checked and in good order apart from no Kosher food being in stock.

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

ICVs positively noted reading materials had been provided to some detainees.

ICVs positively noted that female hygiene packs had been provided.

Areas for Improvement or points raised:

- No Kosher food in stock.
- Shower in corridor 41-50 out of use drain blocked.
- Wheelchair taken from suite by NEAS still missing.
- Shortage of detainee pillows

Force Response:

- Kosher food is now in place and a Custody Sgt tasked with maintaining this stock across the operational suites.
- Shower drains noted at the time and has been resolved.
- Wheelchair ordered and expected W/c 13th May.
- Stock counter completed with regards to pillows and mattresses, these were all ordered, and all cells equipped.

Middle Engine Lane – North Tyneside

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

ICVs positively noted well stocked detainee meals and clothing.

Exercise Yard checked and all in order.

ICVs positively noted that female hygiene packs had been provided where needed.

Areas for Improvement or points raised:

- Lockers open.
- Mattresses stored in corridors.
- Detainee shoes and clothes on floors outside cells
- Out of date drinks removed.

Force Response:

- Staff to be reminded to ensure all lockers and minor access doors are secure. Also, reminder with regards to clothes and shoes, to use detainee lockers located next to the cell, or bigger items to then be placed in detainee property store.
- The suite mattresses were reviewed, all checked for damage/in need of replacement. All old/damaged stock was removed from the suite and replaced.
- Thank you for removing out of date drinks. Regular checks are to be conducted to ensure stock rotation prevents items having to be discarded as used long before use by dates.