



NORTHUMBRIA
**POLICE & CRIME
COMMISSIONER**

Independent Custody Visitors

April 2026

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 **April 2026**.

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.

Food stocks and kitchen checked.

Wheelchair on site.

Stores checked and at a good level.

Areas for improvement:

- Two detainees had to request toilet roll however it was not stated by ICVs if detainees were not offered due to a risk assessment being undertaken.

Force Response:

Apart from dry cells toilet roll should be kept in the cell for the detainee to use at their convenience unless a risk assessment has determined this is not appropriate. This could be for several reasons, including a history of flooding cells.

Forth Banks – Newcastle

One visit was undertaken, the overall cleanliness of the suite was good, and all staff were polite and helpful.

All detainee food checked and in good order.

ICVS positively noted that detainee religious items had been stored correctly and with care.

Areas for Improvement or points raised:

- Leak in ceiling of cell 6.
- No covers on detainee drinks
- Detainee microwave in need of cleaning

Force Response:

Daily checks are completed on all cells and any maintenance issues are referred through as soon as identified. Forth Banks was closed for refurbishments from 13 April 2026 and reopened on Monday 25 May 2026.

Etal Lane – Newcastle (Resilience)

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

Food and stocks checked and all in good order.

Female sanitary products checked and in order.

Areas for Improvement or points raised:

- **Detainee food checked and all in date however lack of selection.**
- **Exercise yard floor covered in mud and in need of cleaning.**
- **Cells feel cold.**
- **Several lights out throughout the suite.**

Force Response:

Etal Lane was opened as a resilience Custody suite between 13 April and 25 May 2026. The initial supply of food was limited but was expanded. The exercise yard was scrubbed and it has now been factored into any future opening for resilience. Additional blankets were sourced whilst the temperature in the suite was sorted. Lighting has also been raised.

All of the comments above will be incorporated into any future plans to open Etal Lane as a resilience suite,

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.

Food and stocks checked and all in good order.

Exercise yard checked and in order.

Areas for Improvement or points raised:

- **Out of date detainee food removed.**
- **Cell 11 damaged light**
- **Cell 9 toilet leak.**
- **Cell 24 broken hatch.**
- **Several detainees reported cell call bells not being answered (15.04.26 5:45pm)**

Force Response:

Stock rotation is important and it is disappointing that there has been another occurrence at Middle Engine Lane. The Inspectors have now been asked to review food stock for dates and a review of the stock ordered.

Daily checks are completed on all cells and any maintenance issues are referred through as soon as identified. All of the above have now been repaired.

The call bells are for emergency use as every detainee is checked on every half or full hour. The calls are answered as a priority unless there is another emergency within the suite.