



VERA BAIRD^{QC}
POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER

Report of Office of Police & Crime Commissioner

Independent Custody Visitors findings – April 2019

The Police & Crime Commissioner, Vera Baird QC, would like to take this opportunity to thank Independent Custody Visitors for the work they have undertaken when visiting custody suites within the Northumbria Force area. The ICVs are valued members of the volunteer team. Below are the points raised during **April 2019** from the stations visited.

Issues Raised following introduction of PCC ICV Custody Suite Questionnaire

Following the 2014 HMIC Inspection into Northumbria Police Custody, a number of recommendations were made by HMIC to improve the custody process and service offered to detainees.

Northumbria Police have produced an action plan to address the issues raised with added checks by officers that these recommendations are being delivered. The Commissioner requested that ICV's be part of this process to make sure that an independent check that the force are delivering on these recommendations is made.

The OPCC produced a checklist of questions with each question relating to a specific recommendation in the report. During the month of **April 2019** no issues of concern were highlighted by visitors in addition to the areas highlighted below.

Berwick

All areas clean and tidy, food in date and ICVs warmly welcomed. No issues reported.

Southwick

Suite clean and tidy, food checked and all in order and staff polite and helpful.

North Tyneside – Middle Engine Lane

Custody suite clean and tidy

Staff polite and helpful

Areas for Improvement:

06/04/19 – Affray alarm within suite not working however had been reported.

12.04.19 – Suite short staffed and no additional staff available from neighboring suite at Forth Banks.

20.04.19 – Shoe and clothes lockers left open. Detainees not offered washing and hygiene packs

28.04.19 – Shift short staffed.

Force Response:

6/4/19 – Affray alarm not working.

This was brought to the attention of the custody Inspector responsible for MEL , Inspector Ghani who arranged via the maintenance team to have the fault rectified. The contractor attended and has rectified the error .The hub staff on all shifts has been reminded by Inspector Ghani of the requirement to ensure that the volume of the audible alarm within the hub is kept at a level so that it can be clearly heard by the custody staff in the event of activation.

12/4/19 Suite short staffed and no additional staff available from Neighboring suite at forth banks.

D Rota were day shift, A Rota were nights.

There were no DO shortages on nights as they had 8 detention officers, so the assumption is that this visit was during the hours of 0700 and 1900 hrs. .The historic resources list shows that there were 3 detention officers on duty at Mel that day , ideally there should be 5 .This would appear to be due to 2 officers being on pre-arranged annual leave , 1 on a pre-arranged allocated additional rest day (ARD) and one officer on certified sick leave . The other suites within the force did not have any capacity to provide staff to assist at MEL that day. Having looked at the duties roster for the rest of the month and into May, it would appear that this staffing shortage was mainly isolated to one set of shifts.

20/4/19 Shoe and clothes lockers left open. Detainees not offered washing and hygiene packs.

D rota was dayshift and A were nights.

The custody unit have recently been fortunate enough to be allocated an analyst who researches force performance data. One of the areas of performance identified as requiring improvement within custody across the force is the accurate recording of the offer of a female hygiene pack. Detention officers are also encouraged to offer a detainee washing facilities at the appropriate time within a prolonged period of detention and if detained overnight prior to going to court .This is subject of ongoing monitoring. By way of a reminder for everyone Inspector Ghani will ask that all custody staff strive to improve performance in these areas.

28/4/19 Shift were short staffed

D Rota were days and A Rota were nights

The resourcing at MEL on dayshift appears to have been correct with 5 detention officers. The other hubs were also correctly resourced.

A Rota had 6 detention officers on nightshift so they were not short staffed .All of the other hubs appear to have been correctly resourced so it would have been unlikely that staff would have been moved around due to short notice staffing issues.