



VERA BAIRD^{QC}
POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER

Report of Office of Police & Crime Commissioner

Independent Custody Visitors findings – February 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 **February 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 **February 2019** no issues of concern were highlighted by visitors in addition to the areas highlighted below.

Berwick

19/12/19 All areas clean and tidy; food in date, ICVs warmly welcomed.

Southwick

Suite clean and tidy and staff polite and helpful

11/02/19 - quick access to the custody suites

Areas for Improvement:

03/12/19

4 cells – intercom still out of use

2 detainees who had been overnight had not been offered shower facilities

09/02/19

Short staffed

Cell 5 has a broken toilet and water is leaking (was reported in December 2018)

The drain is blocked, resulting water in the exercise yard

Shoe lockers left open

11/02/19

Detainee 19/3424 expressed concern regarding the manner of his arrest. Wrists were red and marked, detainee claimed due to handcuffs.

28/02/19

Shoes/clothes lockers left open

Force Response:

11/02/19

Detainee 19/3424 expressed concern regarding the manner of his arrest. Wrists were red and marked, detainee claimed due to handcuffs. The detainee had been volatile on arrest and had been restrained through the use of handcuffs. At 13:53 hrs he was seen by the HCP in relation to the potential soft tissue damage caused by the cuffs and prescribed some paracetamol. This treatment was received prior to the attendance of the ICV at 14:47 hrs the same day, where the detainee has raised his concerns but omitted to inform the visitors that he has already received medical treatment for the reddening. This is fully documented on the custody record.

03/12/19

2 detainees who had been overnight had not been offered shower facilities

Staff have been reminded in relation to documentation of what they offer detainees. There are no specific custody records references in relation to these detainees so we are unable to check individual custody records. However the staff have been spoken to and state that all detainees on that day were offered showers however they have failed to document this on ECR . It is imperative that it is documented and they have been reminded to do so.

Staff have also been reminded to ensure that shoe lockers are locked at all times . There are some faulty locks which will be addressed as part of the scheduled repair plan.

In relation to all of the repairs detailed above , as discussed at the last ICV panel meeting , once the refurbishment of South Shields is completed – date yet unknown. Then Southwick will be closing for a few days so that all of the repairs can be effectively addressed. Inspector Cowling will ensure that the ICV panel are informed once South Shields is completed so they can re-start their visits and will also ensure that they are informed when Southwick closes for repairs.

In relation to staff shortages , the latest new intake of Detention Officers have now started , we have recruited 10 in total and this has addressed staffing issues .

North Tyneside – Middle Engine Lane

Custody suite clean and tidy

Staff polite and helpful

Areas for Improvement:

06/02/19

Short staffed

Mattress and pillow at the end of corridor

A rota- 4 DO with 2 AL (minimum should be 5)

Mattresses/ pillow are removed from cells on a temporary basis for cleaning or when risk presented by DP , otherwise they are kept inside .

10/02/19

One Detention Officer down on shift

C Rota- 5 DO on duty (minimum is 5 so not short) one moved to A5 for the day to assist them

22/02/19

Floor & shower (Block 31-40) stained. Shower stained, this has been mentioned before and discussed at ICV meeting on 6/4 , the shower is water stained not dirty just wear and tear as its 9 years old now . Insp Hase checked with Sgts who confirm safe and suitable for use

28/02/19

B Rota – only 4 Detention Officers available

B Rota – 4 DO, 1 AL and one on compassionate leave (minimum should be 5)

Forth Banks

Staff friendly, helpful and polite

06/02/19

Cell 31 – toilet flush broken

Cell 49 – floor requires repairing

Female in male wing but she reported no issues.

Some clothes & shoes on floor (rather than lockers)

Some cells out of action

16/02/19

All staff helpful and polite

Areas for Improvement:

16/02/19

ICVs arrived at 6.25pm – informed by Custody Sergeant it could take up to 30 minutes to be seen (Custody Sergeant was available after 15-20 minutes)

Only 2 detainees reported as being treated with respect (three appeared unhappy and one was emotionally unwell)

18/02/19

All staff helpful and friendly.

No issues, fairly quiet.

25/02/19

Immediate access to custody suite via Duty Inspector

Very quiet – Dos clear and efficient

Force Response:

Cell 31 – toilet flush broken – this has been fixed since the ICV Visit

Cell 49 – floor requires repairing - this has been fixed since the ICV visit.

Some clothes & shoes on floor (rather than lockers) – Staff and Sergeants are continually reminded about the importance of clothes and shoes being placed in lockers. The ICV feedback is valuable to the custody inspectors as it allows us to identify areas of development and feedback these areas to the relevant detention officers.

Some cells out of action- Cells are sporadically taken out of action for a variety of reasons. Force/custody systems are continually updated with the rationale behind any closed cells and the repairs are added to the daily maintenance check sheet so that estates can take the necessary action(s) and get the cells back into use ASAP

ICVs arrived at 6.25pm – informed by Custody Sergeant it could take up to 30 minutes to be seen (Custody Sergeant was available after 15-20 minutes) – Custody Sergeants strive to accommodate ICV's as promptly as possible. Attendance at 6.25 pm would indicate that the Custody Sergeants would have been doing a handover with the next shift. Part of this handover is to ensure that the next sergeant coming on duty is aware of all risks associated with each detainee and these handovers between shifts are an essential part of risk management within the suite.