



Independent Custody Visitors

December 2020.

On the 24th March 2020, following an announcement by the Prime Minister re Covid-19 and government guidelines, all visits to custody suites were suspended until further notice.

To ensure the OPCC maintained an overview of the work of custody, the OPCC liaised with the custody manager and custody record reviews were undertaken by ICVs.

In October 2020 ICVs returned to face to face visiting and undertook visits to the three main custody suites across the force area, with their findings reported back to the Police and Crime Commissioner, Kim McGuinness.

Below are some of the highlights, issues and other newsworthy information raised during visits or by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Southwick

One visit was made to Southwick, the suite was found to be clean and tidy. Staff were friendly and helpful and there were no specific detainee concerns raised.

Areas for improvement:

- Lockers and panels open outside cells.
- Cell 3 door sticking
- Cell 23 faulty call buzzer

Force Response:

Excellent to see that staff have given the ICV's a warm welcome and assisted where they could. Faults may well have already been identified and rectified by our estates team, however I will ensure that this is confirmed. Good housekeeping is imperative within the suites and staff will be reminded to close lockers and panels on cell corridors, to prevent any accidents/injuries to staff or DP's.

North Tyneside – Middle Engine Lane

One visit was undertaken to Middle Engine Lane, staff were polite and friendly to detainees and the overall cleanliness of the suite was good. Specific praise given to DO 5185 for his assistance with visitors and detainees. ICVs witnessed youth detainee being provided rights and also offer of mental health support to a female detainee.

Areas for Improvement:

- Some clothes lockers and water panel doors open.
- Cell 10 + 30 = Hatch fault
- Cell 36 damaged sink
- Cell 37 broken toilet

Force Response:

I have spoken to DO 5185 personally and passed on the positive comments/observations from the ICV's. This is very pleasing as not only is Gareth a member of my team, he has also set the bar at a level I expect all staff to achieve when escorting ICV's around the suites. Housekeeping to be addressed, faults to be reported/rectified if not already done.

Forth Banks

One visit was undertaken to Forth Banks where staff were polite and friendly, the overall cleanliness of the suite was good, food stocks checked and out of date sleeves disposed of.

Detainee provided with reading materials prior to ICV visit taking place. One detainee complained of not being offered their rights and family not notified of their detention. ICVs checked the custody record and it was found that officers had provided both of the above.

Areas for Improvement:

- Detainee lockers open
- Mattresses in cell corridors
- Cell 28 out of use due to broken fire alarm
- Cell 42 out of use due to broken intercom
- Cell 47 out of use due to broken toilet

- Some cell call bells ringing apparently without being answered (7.55pm / 11.12.20)

Force Response:

Again pleasing that staff were polite and friendly, proving that this can be achieved in what sometimes can be an intense, busy environment. Housekeeping to be addressed as well as the repercussions of not closing lockers and leaving items lying in the corridors. Estates to be notified of faults, if not already resolved.