

Independent Custody Visitors

November 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, overall the suite was found to be clean and tidy. Staff were friendly and helpful and there were very few issues raised.

Areas for improvement:

- Detainee showers not fully working due to water pressure issues throughout station.
- Clothes and shoes stored outside of cells

Force Response:

Estates have checked the showers and confirm poor water pressure. An order has been raised to rectify this issue.

Staff have been reminded that detainee clothing must not be placed on corridor floors. In relation to shoes, some cells at Southwick do not have individual shoe lockers. As such, the detainees' shoes need to be left outside the cell so that they are accessible to detainees so they can put their shoes on each time they leave the cell. This is to preserve detainee dignity; therefore their shoes should be left in a readily accessible location so they do not have to walk about the suite bare foot.

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.

Areas for Improvement:

- Pillows and mattresses stored outside of cells
- Cell 3 night light not working
- Cell 8 hatch broken
- Detainee 027639 not offered shower or exercise (Date of visit 17.11.20) – unknown if the detainee was in custody for extended period.
- Female detainee not offered a female hygiene pack.

Force Response:

Staff have been reminded that detainee bedding must not be placed on corridor floors.

The broken light and cell hatch have now been repaired.

Staff have been reminded that all female detainees should be offered a hygiene pack. Staff are aware that a shower should be offered to detainees where practicable, and in particular to those detainees who spend an extended period in police custody.

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 all in order and exercise yard checked and in order. ICVs thanked Sgt (3274) for his assistance and helpfulness during visit.

Some detainee had also been provided with distraction items such as quizzes whilst detained in the cell which were welcomed.

Areas for Improvement:

- Cell 25 sink broken
- Cell 43/45 – intercom not working
- Cell 44 – buzzer not working
- Detainee personal clothing/mattresses left in corridor
- Several sleeves of drinks out of date to be disposed of

Force Response:

The sinks, intercoms and buzzers have now all been repaired and are in working order.

Staff have been reminded that detainee clothing and bedding must not be placed on corridor floors.

The out of date drinks have been disposed of and all food and drink stock checked to ensure that it is within it's 'use by' date.