

Independent Custody Visitors

October 2020.

Due to Covid 19 face to face visiting was suspended in March 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 however ICVs raised several points regarding the suite which are highlighted below

Areas for improvement:

- Live Scan machine not working
- Concerns regarding social distancing in suite however it was noted by ICVs that custody staff were wearing PPE as required.
- Cleaning cupboard open.
- Fire alarm system showing a fault.
- Supplies were checked and sleeves of drinks were found to be out of date, these were disposed of.

Force Response:

Chief Insp of Custody confirmed that Southwick is an older suite and therefore space is at a premium. However it is the Custody Sergeants role to ensure the safe management of the suite and movement of people within it. A reminder of this will be provided to all staff however it is pleasing to note that staff were all utilising PPE as required.

Recent maintenance and building works in the suite has resulted in the Live Scan machine missing a software update which is to be undertaken imminently. In relation to the fire alarm system this is a brand new system and work is being undertaken with the suppliers to fix any faults however it should be confirmed that there are no issues with this to the safe running of the suite.

North Tyneside – Middle Engine Lane

One visit was undertaken to Middle Engine Lane, staff were polite and friendly to detainees, the overall cleanliness of the suite and exercise yards was good, stocks of food and drinks all in order

Areas for Improvement:

- Hand sanitizer was in place within the suite however it was thought that additional bottles would be beneficial.
- Detainee held overnight had not yet been offered a shower due to staff being unavailable to accommodate.

Force Response:

Northumbria Police appreciate the input from Custody visitors and will review and take necessary action.

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.

Areas for Improvement:

- The time it took ICVs to gain access took too long. We appreciate the demands on staff, but when ICVs arrive they should be shown in to the suite as quickly as possible.
- Cells 14 and 26 out of order due to fire alarm issue and detainee buzzer.

- Stores checked – female hygiene products are in stock however all are of the same size.

Force Response:

Northumbria Police appreciate the input from Custody visitors and will review and take necessary action.