

Independent Custody Visitors

January 2021.

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 with specific thanks given to Sgt 1405 for his assistance during the visit. There were no specific detainee concerns raised.

ICVs noted that female staff had been allocated to female detainees.

Detainee masks were noted to be hanging on door handles of cells however the Chief Inspector of Custody has since confirmed that new masks will be provided to detainees after use therefore they should not be hanging on cell door handles.

Areas for improvement:

- Lockers and panels open outside cells.
- Cell 3 door sticking
- Cells 12/16 – Cracks in plaster
- Cell 14 – 23 drain issues
- Cell 18 broken intercom
- Cell 21 broken call bell
- Cell 23 faulty call buzzer

Force Response:

Of the areas for improvement highlighted, they have been checked from the list above and the following remain outstanding, still to be repaired:

- Cell 12 – Cracks in plaster
- Cell 21 broken call bell

The above points have been further raised with our estates in order to identify where we are with getting the works completed. All other issues have been rectified.

Shift Inspectors have been contacted in order to address the issue of masks being left hanging on door handles in order to stop this happening in the future:

- Masks are not to be hung on door handles

North Tyneside – Middle Engine Lane

One visit was undertaken to Middle Engine Lane, the overall cleanliness of the suite was good apart from points raised below. Specific praise given to DO 4330 for his assistance with visitors and detainees.

No detainees were seen due to either them being asleep, violent, in interview or refusing a visit.

Areas for Improvement:

- Visit undertaken on 27.01.21 – detainee 21/1945 not offered shower after being in custody over 24hr period.
- Pillows and mattresses stored at end of corridor
- Light out in corridor 21 - 30
- Showers throughout suite in need of cleaning
- Out of date drinks and food disposed of

Force Response:

Of the areas for improvement highlighted above, checks have been conducted and all repairs have been now been completed. (Light out in corridor 21 – 30)

The following areas have been raised with the custody shift inspectors as learning points to address with their teams.

- Visit undertaken on 27.01.21 – detainee 21/1945 not offered shower after being in custody over 24hr period.
- Pillows and mattresses stored at end of corridor
- Out of date drinks and food disposed of
- Masks are not to be hung on door handles

The following point has been raised with the cleaning team:

- Showers throughout suite in need of cleaning

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.

ICVs noted that there was a lack of available pillows for detainees.

Detainee masks were noted to be hanging on door handles of cells however the Chief Inspector of Custody has since confirmed that new masks will be provided to detainees after use therefore they should not be hanging on cell door handles.

Areas for Improvement:

- Detainee lockers open
- Lack of detainee pillows
- Mattresses/pillows in cell corridors
- Cell 31 – leaking sink
- Cell 42 – broken intercom
- Cell 44 – broken buzzer

Force Response:

Of the areas for improvement highlighted, a check was completed of the list above and the following points remain outstanding and still to be repaired:

- Cell 42 – broken intercom – The company that repair the intercom system have been into Forth Banks Custody within the last 8 – 10 days and repaired a number of intercoms. This particular defect required a part which was not available when they were last out to repair and the issued was flagged up then, I have made our estates aware again of this outstanding works. In the meantime this cell is not in use.

The following areas have been raised with the respective custody shift inspector in order to raise with their teams and address the issues:

- Detainee lockers open
- Mattresses / pillows in cell corridors
- Masks are not to be hung on door handles

The following area was due to a lack of new pillows being available in custody and the Officer responsible for ordering the pillows (and mattresses) has been contacted in order to ensure we have sufficient available for use, with a supply of spares available when required. The custody shift Inspectors have also been asked to remind their staff when detainees cause damage to custody property, necessary and appropriate action is taken.

- Lack of detainee pillows