

Independent Custody Visitors

March 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

Two visits was made to Southwick, the suite was found to be clean and tidy on both occasions. Staff were friendly and helpful.

Food and drink stocks were checked and all in order.

ICVs also noted that correct PPE was being utilised by staff.

Areas for improvement:

- Lockers and panels open outside cells.
- Mattresses stored in corridor.
- M4 broken hatch
- M5 out of order as being used for storage
- M21 + 23 out of use

Force Response:

Southwick Custody is now closed and all maintenance/estate issues will be resolved during the closure. However staff reminded of the correct protocol around storage of mattresses and locker doors being closed.

North Tyneside – Middle Engine Lane

Two visits were undertaken to Middle Engine Lane, the overall cleanliness of the suite was very good and all staff were polite and helpful. All food and drink stocks checked and all in order.

No issues raised by detainees apart from requests for blanket.

Areas for Improvement:

- Cell 31 – Hatch broken
- Cell 35 – camera out of order

Force Response:

Camera in Cell 35 has been fixed. Cell 31's hatch has been reported in hand. Overall a pleasing report with no major issues.

Forth Banks

One visit was undertaken to Forth Banks where staff were polite and friendly, the overall cleanliness of the suite was good.

One detainee needed a breathing machine which was provided safely in the cell.

Zono cleaning of the suite in response to Covid undertaken on 08/03/21.

ICVs noted that a female officer had been correctly appointed to a female detainee on their visit.

Officer 4364 was very responsive to points raised during the visit.

Stores also checked and all well stocked.

Areas for Improvement:

- Detainee lockers open.
- Custody record did not state that female hygiene pack had been offered.
- Detainee masks noted to be hanging on cell door.
- Cell 42 – out of order due to broken intercom
- Cracking plaster on walls outside cells 1 – 10 (near detainee kitchen)

Force Response:

Good to hear that staff were polite and friendly with the cleanliness of the suite being good. Again staff reminded about masks on doors and lockers being closed at all times. Maintenance/estates aware of intercom issue (Cell 42), however this may have to wait until a partial suite closure when the whole system is updated.