

OFFICE OF POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER

25th January 2014

CUSTODY VISITS SUMMARY FOR 22nd NOVEMBER 2012 to 31st DECEMBER 2013

REPORT TO THE PCC / CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE OPCC

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide the Commissioner and Chief Executive with a summary of the custody visits undertaken.

2. BACKGROUND -

- 2.1 Details of the visits undertaken for the period 22nd November 2012 – 31 December 2013. The Deputy Police & Crime Commissioner, worked with the relevant officers within Northumbria Police to address any concerns which Custody visitors raised.

3. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 It is considered the report has no equal opportunities implications.

4. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The functions of the independent custody visiting scheme do have human rights implications. In checking the treatment of and conditions for detainees in police stations, independent custody visitors are protecting detainees' human rights, particularly Article 5, the right to liberty and security of persons.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no additional risk implications arising directly from the report although the independent custody visiting scheme supports the objective to ensure that the public continue to have confidence in the Authority and the force.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 It is considered the report has no financial implications.

7. RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 The Commissioner and Chief Executive are asked to note the custody visits undertaken during the period outlined above.

NORTHUMBERLAND

Alnwick

20 visits during period, 6 detainees, 5 visited

ICV Issues included:

It was noted that everything was in order on the visit

Apart from issues specific to showers and toilets all visits were of a positive nature

Bedlington

41 visits during period, 180 detainees, 12 refused.

Reasons unable to visit: interview, medical treatment, asleep etc.

ICV Issues included:

Shower area floor looked grubby, Custody suite short staffed, blocked toilets, interview room not in operation, medical room left open, cell 27 and 36 needed new mattresses.

Hexham

20 visits during period, 0 detainees.

ICV Issues:

It was noted on all occasions that staff were friendly and cells and suite were clean and tidy

Berwick

6 visits during this period. 0 detainees.

ICV Issues:

No concerns raised

NEWCASTLE

Etal Lane

51 visits, 546 detainees, 369 visited

ICV Issues Raised:

It was noted that on all visits that staff were helpful

Issues raised included, water on floor outside cell D, wash facilities not offered, detainees complained of being cold,

North Tyneside

57 visits, 517 detainees, 334 visited

ICV Issues Raised:

Issues raised included broken toilets, mattress seams coming away, out of date stock, medical room being open, various defects in cells (which can take weeks to resolve example of this is cell 8 being out of use due to a broken light fitting, reported 11/10/13, 21/10/13, 31/10/13, 6/11/13)

SOUTH TYNESIDE

South Shields

36 visits, 199 detainees, 139 Visited

ICV Issues Raised:

It was noted on all visits that staff were very helpful.

Issues raised included requesting a written response re contact with mother, food stocks always in good order, CCTV working,

SUNDERLAND

Gillbridge

34 visits, 196 detainees, 121 visited

ICV Issues Raised:

On a majority of visits ICV found the cells to be in good working order.

Issues raised include, damaged toiler in cell F3, two of the three female cells were out of use (14/10/13), 2 mattress in exercise yard, water boiler broke (15/2/13)

Southwick

3 visit, 10 detainees, 9 visited

ICV Issues Raised:

It was noted on all occasions that staff were helpful

It was noted on all occasions that the custody suite was clean and tidy

Washington

15 visits, 70 detainees, 51 visited,

ICV Issues Raised:

It was noted on all occasions that staff were helpful

It was noted on all occasions that the custody suite was clean and tidy

Conclusions:

As the OPCC has overall responsibility for the work of the Independent Custody visitors and the actions that follow regarding any issues that they raise.

The ICVs are an integral part of the family of volunteers within the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner and it is important that everything is done to ensure they see results from their visits.

The forms which have been submitted by the ICVs over the last year have been reviewed by officers of the OPCC and a sample of issues taken and revisited at two custody suites in the force area (Gateshead and North Tyneside).

The following issues were found –

North Tyneside – visited on 21st February 2014.

7 packs of Beans and wedges were out of date: The date on the food was end of Jan 14. There is no stock rotation of food.

Medical room 1 was unlocked –

Despite shoe lockers being empty, they were not used for cells 14, 15, 16 and in shoe lockers 18, 22 and 23 toilet rolls were stored in them and the shoes on the floor.

Water dispenser – paper cups lying on floor.

Gateshead – visited on 21st February 2014.

Roughness on the edges of pillows.

Showers – used shampoo packets in shower, 6 bars of used soap.

Dirty stained towel on hand sink.

Graffiti in exercise yard – it was chalky type graffiti and simply needed rubbing off.

Women's shower STILL out of use – this has been out of use for months.

Cleaner's cupboard open.

Interview room not in use – dated 19/ 2/ 14

No first aid kit visible on medical room.

These issues have been reported to Sean McKenna of Northumbria Police and a report on how they have been actioned has been requested.

There has been no consistency by Northumbria Police in addressing the problems – some are dealt with quickly, others that require people to change appear to be taking longer to achieve. Examples of this is all staff should be rotating food stocks to ensure wastage is kept to a minimum.

Despite the pending closure of Gateshead custody suite, issues such as showers should be remedied as quickly as possible. The broken female shower regularly appears on the reports. A quick fix solution should be in place.

Graffiti should be removed immediately. This is a simple job, it is on the outside of the cell and requires the metal cover to be removed and replaced.

It is recommended that the Commissioner has ICV visit reports as a monthly standing item at her joint business meetings so any issues can be discussed with the Chief Constable.

A monthly report of the issues raised and what has been done to rectify the problems should be put on line to show openness and transparency.

13th March 2014.

A report from ACC Joanna Farrell of Northumbria Police has been received in to the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner. Northumbria Police have taken action in the following way –

Re Custody Visitors Report

I write to provide further update on the remedial action taken to address the issues raised in the Custody Visit Summary for 22 November 2012 to 31 December 2013

All cleaning and housekeeping matters have been attended to and the importance of daily checks reinforced to staff and supervisors.

Specific issues pertaining to equipment are as detailed below

Gilbridge

2 female cells out use – all female cells now in working order.
Damaged toilet in F3, repaired

Gateshead

Graffiti in exercise yard, removed.
Damage to spyhole on cell 8, repaired.
First aid kit present but stored in tambre unit within the medical room.
Interview room not in use, awaiting replacement keyboard for recording equipment.

In addition for Gateshead. The shower in the female cells has a leak causing water to run into the rooms below. To trace the source of the leak it will require a cell block closure to

enable the tiles from the shower cubicle to be removed, the leak located, fixed and re-tiled. The cost is estimated at £1000 +. Female detainees currently utilise shower facilities within the detention wing. This suite is earmarked for closure when Forth Banks come on line later this year. If the same problem were to occur with other showers this may become a necessary expenditure, however, it appears unnecessary in the current financial climate.

As a consequence of your recent report I have reviewed how we currently deal with the issues that are raised and how we can better expedite matters in the future.

We will seek to ensure that all visitors are accompanied by a supervisor throughout their visit, in so far as they would want to be, to provide for immediate remedial intervention whenever possible e.g. damage to mattresses, water on floors etc. At the conclusion of the visit the supervisor will ensure the completion of the Custody Visitors Record to include matters identified and rectified and those which remain outstanding. Thereafter we will undertake to have all matters remedied with 72 hours of them coming to notice or where this is not possible due to structural or the requirement for specialist services, a time-scale will be advised.

Following the visits, upon receipt of the Custody Visit Summary from yourselves, we will provide you with a response of actions taken within 5 day of receipt.

May I take this opportunity to thank the Custody Visitors for their commitment to this very important role, I see it as an essential part of monitoring and improving standards relating to custody care within our suites. As you are aware we will be opening Forth Banks in the latter part of the year with the largest of our custody suites and the additional reassurance provided by the visitors will continue to assist us. I am heartened to hear that the visitors find the staff friendly and helpful.