



HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland
Improving Policing across Scotland

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PRESS RELEASE

Police Custody in Forth Valley Inspected

A new report inspecting police custody facilities has raised concern about a 'lack of pace' by Police Scotland in making vital improvements affecting the care of detainees.

A number of recent reviews by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) and Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) have highlighted issues at police custody centres across the country.

Inspections from over the past two years have noted concerns in areas including record keeping, custody centre staffing and training, delayed releases, and disparities between the risk assessments carried out for detainees and the corresponding care plans put in place.

During their latest custody inspection – in the Forth Valley divisional area – staff from HMICS and HIS found several issues duplicating those already highlighted.

HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, Craig Naylor, said rather than repeating the recommendations for improvement previously given to Police Scotland, he would like to see them act swiftly to address recurring themes.

Mr Naylor said: "As part of our joint custody inspection programme we have recently published seven reports relating to custody centres across Scotland where we have assessed the treatment of, and conditions for, individuals being detained.

“In this latest custody report we have made no new recommendations regarding custody centre operations for Police Scotland.

“Instead, we have outlined our concerns regarding several issues, which despite previous recommendations made in our recent reports, were also evident during this inspection.

“The fact these issues are still ongoing elevates our concern regarding a lack of pace in addressing previous recommendations with national relevance.”

Inspectors from HMICS and HIS carried out an onsite review of the custody centre at Falkirk Police Station in February 2025.

As part of the inspection, HMICS staff also reviewed the Police Scotland National Custody System (NCS) and examined a sample of 40 records from those of the 383 detainees processed at the custody centre during November 2024.

Inspectors assessed the physical environment, including the quality of cells, and observed key processes and procedures relevant to police custody operations.

They also spoke with people detained at the custody centre and interviewed custody staff and healthcare professionals during their visit.

Within their findings, inspectors highlighted a lack of consistency in the recording of information on the NCS.

While some aspects of custody centre operations were recorded well, they saw repeated recording errors in areas including provision of legal rights, healthcare consultations, and meal provision.

They also noted gaps in the recording of care plan rationale.

Of the 40 records they reviewed, 29 detainees had been assessed as being ‘high risk’ – meaning they should be under constant observation or visited and roused at 15 or 30 minute intervals.

Yet of those marked as 'high risk', 15 were placed on the lowest level of observations without any other apparent risk mitigation in place – and gaps in the records regarding a rationale for decision making.

Mr Naylor said: “We recently raised this same issue following our joint inspection of custody in Ayrshire, where we recommended that Police Scotland should ensure custody staff have a clear understanding of what response is required for each of the defined observations levels and that these are applied consistently.”

In total, the report highlighted 13 past recommendations that it said, “had relevance for Falkirk custody centre”.

These included recommendations relating to the maintenance and repair of crucial custody infrastructure, the location of CCTV viewing facilities to reduce the likelihood of distraction and ensuring custody staff received appropriate training and guidance where cleaning is part of their role.

It also included a past recommendation to ‘review compliance with policy’ relating to the delayed release of detainees.

Staff at the Forth Valley custody centre told inspectors there was a lack of management visibility within the department.

They said some managers worked from home, and compressed hour patterns were common, both reducing the number of days managers were at work and visible to staff.

Concern was also raised about staffing levels generally.

Both such issues had previously been highlighted and appropriate recommendations for improvement made in past custody inspection reports.

The Falkirk custody centre features 29 cells and is the only police custody centre in the Forth Valley divisional area, which covers the sheriffdoms of Falkirk, Stirling and Alloa.

During 2023 to 2024 the custody centre was used for detainees on 5057 occasions, an increase of 687 on the year before.

Inspectors interviewed 11 detainees during the inspection, who were all complimentary about the staff and care provided.

Healthcare at the custody centre is delivered by Southeast Scotland Police Custody Healthcare and Forensic Examination Service, which is run by NHS Lothian.

Inspectors found the healthcare provided to be well managed, but made six recommendations to NHS Lothian in relation to matters including ensuring that a take home version of the anti-overdose medication naloxone is offered to all detainees and that all detainees at risk of nicotine withdrawal are offered nicotine replacement therapy.

It was also recommended NHS Lothian should review the prescribing processes at the Falkirk police custody centre and strengthen the governance of medication prescribing.

Ends

Notes

Places of detention, including police custody centres within the UK, are monitored as part of the human rights treaty: 'Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT)'.

OPCAT requires that all places of detention are visited regularly by a National Preventive Mechanism (NPM), an independent body or group of bodies which monitor detainee treatment and conditions. HMICS is one of several bodies making up the NPM in the UK.

Ends notes

NOTES TO EDITORS

The 'HMICS Custody Inspection Report – Forth Valley' will be available to download at the [HMICS website](#) from 00.01hrs, 9th July 2025.

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