



**HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland**  
Improving Policing across Scotland

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**PRESS RELEASE**

## **Police Custody in Forth Valley Inspected**

A review of police custody facilities in Forth Valley has raised concerns about the level of care plan being put in place for vulnerable detainees.

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) and Healthcare Improvement Scotland carried out a joint inspection of the police custody centre at Falkirk Police Station.

As part of the inspection, they examined 40 records from a sample of 383 people who had been detained in the Forth Valley area's only police custody centre in November last year.

They noted 29 detainees had been assessed as being at 'high risk', following a vulnerability risk assessment – 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 given the same level of cell check as those deemed to be of low risk, without any other apparent risk mitigation in place.

HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland, Craig Naylor, said: "Effective risk assessment is vital to ensure that detainees can be managed and cared for appropriately.

"The number of instances where a detainee is deemed to be high risk but remains on standard observations with no mitigation in place – or recorded as being in place – remains an ongoing concern.

“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.

“This recommendation clearly has relevance for the Falkirk custody centre.”

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).

Inspectors assessed the physical environment of the custody centre, 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.

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.

From the sample of custody centre records inspectors examined, it was recorded that

- 18% of detainees were intoxicated on arrival.
- 5% declared they were alcoholics, and 15% were drug dependent.
- 43% disclosed a mental health condition, and 35% reported they had previously self-harmed or had attempted suicide.
- 35% were on prescribed medication.
- 23% stated they had difficulty with reading and writing.
- 35% had consumed alcohol and 16% had used drugs prior to arrest.
- All had some form of criminal or police information record.

The report stated: “Statistics relating to mental health were similar to those found in our recent inspections in the west of Scotland, but there were fewer recorded instances of addiction issues.

“Overall, there is a correlation between health, vulnerability and offending which is reasonably consistent across the country.

“It highlights the high level of risk, addiction, mental health, and medical health challenges presented to police custody daily.”

Inspectors highlighted a number of issues during the Forth Valley custody inspection which duplicated issues raised in recent custody inspections carried out across other areas of Scotland.

Rather than repeating recommendations for improvement already issued to Police Scotland, HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland raised concern about a ‘lack of pace’ by Police Scotland in making vital improvements affecting the care of detainees.

Mr Naylor said: “As part of our joint custody inspection programme we have recently published seven custody inspection 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.”

In total, the report noted 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.

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, 9<sup>th</sup> July 2025.

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## **Ends**