

News Release

ISSUED ON BEHALF OF HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY

October 15, 2008

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE MEDICAL SERVICES FOR PEOPLE IN POLICE CUSTODY

A report published today by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMICS) makes a number of recommendations to help police forces provide satisfactory and consistent medical services to people held in custody.

The recommendations are:

- Individual police forces should work with local authorities, health and other agencies to establish best practice in dealing with drunk and incapable people, in the context of locally available services and resources
- The police service in Scotland actively participates in proposed research on identifying appropriate means of supporting and dealing with drunk and incapable people including the use of designated places of safety.
- Whilst the long-term approach could be to transfer responsibility for medical services to the NHS, forces collaborate with the NHS to introduce multi-disciplinary clinical personnel into custody facilities.
- The Tayside Psychiatric Assessment Protocol should be viewed as good practice, and that other police forces in Scotland pursue a similar approach.
- The Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland (ACPOS), via its National Custody Forum, create and incorporate common performance management information within the developing national custody system. This would give forces, police authorities/boards, and the health service a shared understanding of what should be expected and delivered across Scotland.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, Mr Paddy Tomkins said:

“We have found that the level of medical services provided is varied across Scotland. This is mostly due to the piecemeal way in which provision has evolved across the country. However I believe that there are some issues that need to be addressed to ensure those in police custody have access to suitable medical services.

“People who are in police custody may need medical attention for a range of reasons. Whether it is sudden illness, assessment of fitness for interview or because they are drunk and incapable, police forces have a duty of care to individuals in custody.

“We found examples of good practice across Scotland - such as the Tayside Psychiatric Assessment Protocol. This type of initiative can make a difference and we’re encouraging other Forces to adopt similar arrangements.”

NOTES FOR NEWS EDITORS

1. Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland (commonly known as the Police Inspectorate or HMICS) is responsible for inspecting the eight Scottish police forces and five police services. HMICS operates independently of the police forces, police authorities and the Scottish Government and exists to monitor and improve the police services in Scotland.

2. The Medical Services for people in police custody report is available from:
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Justice/Police/>. Advance copies for the media are available from the Scottish Government press office on the number below.

3. Mr Tomkins will be available for broadcast interviews between 15:00 and 16:30 on October 15, 2008. To reserve a slot please contact 0131 244 2939.

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