

# HM INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY FOR SCOTLAND

PRESS RELEASE

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People detained in police custody in Scotland are subject to high standards of care and welfare and while there are some challenges for the new single police service there are also significant opportunities, according to a report published today by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland.

The report, entitled *Thematic Inspection of the Care and Welfare of persons detained in police custody in Scotland*, was published following a series of unannounced weekend visits to police detention facilities across Scotland. The inspection team found a total of 169 people detained during the inspection period and used direct engagement and dialogue with them, as well as scrutiny of the detention infrastructure, to carry out the assessments.

Findings showed that detainees were treated with dignity and respect. Of the 169 seen during the inspection, 168 were well looked after and were themselves satisfied that their care and welfare needs were being met.

However the inspection showed a wide disparity in the overall approach to custody management taken by the different police forces, and HMICS said this was something the new single police service would need to address.

HM Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland, Andrew Laing, said: "What this inspection shows us is that people detained in police custody in Scotland are treated with dignity and respect by professional staff and they have their care and welfare needs met.

"Against this positive picture there are a number of differences in approach between the current eight forces which will present the new single service with some challenges along with significant opportunities for standardisation, and the benefit that brings. That will included standardising differ the approach to risk management, staffing models, training and the provision of healthcare, and computer-based custody management systems."

He continued: "So while the findings in this report are made within the overall framework of governance and accountability arrangements for the eight forces, there is also clear relevance in the recommendations for the Police Service of Scotland."

The full recommendations of the report are as follows:

- That consideration should be given to developing a staffing model for custody which is risk-based, gender compliant, and flexible enough to meet demand.

This is directed at all forces but in the expectation that this area will be reviewed through the establishment of the Police Service of Scotland (PSoS);

- That a single 'handover' form being developed by the Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland) to ensure information is shared when staff change shifts is recognised as emerging good practice and should be introduced throughout Scotland to ensure knowledge and responsibilities for custodies are transferred accurately, consistently and in an auditable way;
- That Grampian Police should urgently explore the feasibility and affordability of installing an interim cell call capability in all cells at the Aberdeen custody suite until the new custody facility is operational;
- That the Police Service of Scotland develop and implement a standardised method to record information in the custody environment, and that a single data management system should also be introduced in due course;
- That the Police Service of Scotland examine healthcare provision across the entire police custody estate to consider the most appropriate needs at each location based on assessment of risk and affordability. This should include clear direction to staff for the effective management of care and welfare for prisoners with mental health issues;
- That the Police Service of Scotland develop a standard national training course for staff working in the custody setting and that this should include a refresher training programme to support ongoing staff development.

## NOTES TO EDITORS

The full report is available to download at [www.hmics.org/publications](http://www.hmics.org/publications)

HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary for Scotland will be available for interviews on between **13:00** and **16:00** on Friday 25 January. For interview/photo requests, or any other media-related query please contact:

HMICS Communications

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### Inspection Methodology

The inspection team visited one main custody suite in all eight police force areas. Chief Constables were informed about the general intention to conduct the inspections but the location, times and dates of visits remained completely confidential so custody centre staff could not anticipate the inspections.

The inspection sought to assess:

- the extent to which detainees care and welfare needs were being addressed;
- how the diverse needs of prisoners were being delivered;
- whether healthcare arrangements were appropriate and accessible;
- the cleanliness, safety and maintenance of custody facilities;

- the competency of staff to assess and manage risk;
- whether custody records were auditable, accurate and kept up to date;
- the appropriateness of staffing models; and
- any other relevant matter observed by the inspection team.

The inspection also contributed to the United Kingdom response to wider international legal obligations (the United Nations Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture(OPCAT)) around the care and welfare of detained persons through independent and unannounced inspections of places of detention. Pages 7 and 8 of the report (Section 3.3) provide further information.

