



HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland
Improving Policing across Scotland

Monday, January 29, 2018

PRESS RELEASE

HMICS publishes report on police custody centres in Tayside Division

Progress has been made by Police Scotland in promoting consistency across the organisation in its approach to custody centres, states a report published today.

However there is scope for further improvement, and a long term plan for the delivery of a custody service in Scotland still has to be developed.

The report from HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland notes recurring themes and that some recommendations and improvement actions from previous custody inspections are still not complete.

It follows an HMICS inspection to assess the treatment of and conditions for those detained in police custody centres at Arbroath, Dundee and Perth.

HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, Derek Penman, said: "We found the staff to be professional and the detainees were generally satisfied with the way they were treated.

"There have been improvements in some areas such as shift handovers, review of risk assessments and accuracy of recording some information but we are disappointed that we continue to find a number of the same issues. Many of our concerns in relation to the custody centres in Tayside will be equally applicable to other custody centres across Scotland and should be taken into account in improvement planning."

While this report contains only one recommendation (which relates to the privacy of detainees), the HMICS findings reinforce the need for previous recommendations and improvement actions to be taken forward.

Mr Penman added that as the future of custody, particularly its resourcing, continues to be of concern, HMICS is committed to having a more sustained focus on custody in the near future.

During the unannounced inspection of the Dundee facility, the cleanliness and hygiene were found to be below an acceptable standard. While Police Scotland took immediate action there remains scope for further improvement.

It was also noted it was not always clear why a detainee had been assessed as low or high risk, nor was the rationale for the subsequent care plan always apparent. "While risk assessment is not an exact science, and much reliance is placed on the skill and expertise of the custody staff to interpret the information before them, we believe Police Scotland must do more to ensure effective assessments and care plans," said Mr Penman.

However, once the risk assessment was in place, it was reviewed appropriately and amended if circumstances required.

A number of key findings have been highlighted in the report and one recommendation has been made which will drive improvement in this specialist area of policing. Police Scotland will be asked to create an action plan to address the recommendations and progress will be monitored by HMICS.

Ends

Notes

Police custody is delivered throughout Scotland by the Criminal Justice Services Division of Police Scotland which aims to promote consistency in working practices across custody centres in Scotland.

The centres in Dundee and Perth are permanently staffed and open to receiving detainees at all times. At the time of the unannounced inspections, the Arbroath centre was piloting weekend-only opening.

This custody inspection was part of an on-going programme of inspections which contribute to the UK's international obligations under the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or 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 the treatment of and conditions for detainees. HMICS is one of several bodies making up the NPM in the UK.

Endsnote

NOTES TO EDITORS

The HMICS Local Policing+ Inspection Programme – Inspection of custody centres located in Tayside Division report is available to download at the HMICS website www.hmics.scot from 1100hrs, Monday 29 January, 2018.

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