



HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland
Improving Policing across Scotland

Friday, October 19, 2018

PRESS RELEASE

HMICS publishes report into Police Scotland custody centres

People detained in police custody in Scotland generally receive a good standard of care despite there being inconsistencies across the country in the facilities in which they are held and how the care is delivered.

In a report published today by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS), Police Scotland is urged to develop a strategy and systems to address these variations and other recurring issues.

The publication follows a series of unannounced visits by HMICS to inspect the treatment of, and conditions for, those detained in 17 police custody centres from Shetland to Campbeltown.

HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, Gill Imery QPM, said: "Staff in these centres provide care in often challenging circumstances and should be commended for their professionalism. It is noted that their ability to do this in an effective and equitable manner can be hampered by factors outwith their control.

"Police custody is a high risk area of policing and, as such, has already been subject to considerable scrutiny by HMICS. A number of the points highlighted in this report have been raised previously in the six custody inspections we have conducted in the past five years.

"One of the more significant recurring issues is the vulnerability of detainees with significant health care needs who other organisations might be better placed to help. A second is the inconsistency in practice where there is no justification for it and a third is the varied quality of the custody centres where some are of poor state but heavily used and others are of a high standard with limited demand.

"However, since the last inspection, progress has been made in a number of areas including providing privacy during the booking in process, in the quality of Person Escort Records and efforts are made to meet the diverse needs of detainees."

The report contains seven recommendations – six for Police Scotland and one for Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) and the Scottish Government. From the previous inspections, 15 recommendations are outstanding.

Many detainees have complex health needs and HMICS believes the availability and quality of health care is vital to their overall treatment while in custody. It is working with HIS on a joint inspection

programme which would allow the provision of health care to be fully assessed with the aim of improving the outcomes for those detained.

Mrs Imery added: "Police Scotland is increasingly caring for highly vulnerable individuals with limited policing resources. It is arguable that other services, such as health, social care and addiction services, would be better placed to meet their needs. The NHS has delivered health care in police custody since 2014 but there are opportunities for other organisations to divert people from detention and to support them during or after their time in custody."

During their visits, HMICS inspectors observed an appropriate and proportionate use of force at custody centres. However, they found variations in how staff record the use of force which consequently makes effective analysis difficult. It recommends that data on the use of force be published to allow transparency and analysis.

HMICS has welcomed the new approach Police Scotland is developing in relation to risk assessment but noted inconsistencies between centres and even between shifts in how they were arrived at and recorded. It is urging Police Scotland to do more to ensure effective vulnerability assessments and that the subsequent care plan is appropriate.

The police service is also being asked to ensure there are appropriate safeguards in place when strip searching children aged 17 or younger.

Police Scotland will be asked to create an action plan to address the recommendations contained within the report. HMICS will scrutinise progress against this plan.

Ends

NOTE

These inspections contribute to the UK's response to its international obligations under the Optional Protocol to the United Nations 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 Preventative 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.

During the visits to the 17 custody centres, detainees, staff and other professionals such as doctors and lawyers were interviewed and the physical environment was assessed. Custody visitors and other stakeholders were also consulted.

The unannounced visits took place at various times of the day and included weekends.

Endsnote

NOTES TO EDITORS

The HMICS Inspection of custody centres across Scotland is available to download at the HMICS website www.hmics.scot from 1100hrs, Friday 19 October, 2018.

For any media enquiries please contact:

Susan Lumsden
HMICS Communications
07768 412 312 / 01330 850 494
Susan.lumsden@gov.scot
Twitter: [@hmics](https://twitter.com/hmics)

Ends