



HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland
Improving Policing across Scotland

Thursday, 6 June, 2019

PRESS RELEASE

Police Custody in Scotland Under Inspection

Significant changes have been made in the delivery of police custody since 2013 and there have been a number of recent positive developments, states a report published today (Thursday, June 6).

The report follows an assessment by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland of the strategic arrangements for the delivery of police custody which considered leadership, governance, planning, people, resources and partnership working.

Police custody is a high risk area of policing business and, as such, has been subject to considerable scrutiny by HMICS in the past six years. Progress towards delivering as effective and efficient a police custody service as possible has been hampered by the under-resourcing of custody and the variable quality of the custody estate. Recently however, Police Scotland has sought to address these issues via a custody remodelling project.

HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary for Scotland, Gill Imery QPM, said: "We commend the progress which has been made, in particular Police Scotland's reduced dependence on local policing officers to help deliver its custody service. Benefits are being realised from the remodelling of custody provision although planned improvements to the custody estate have been affected by recent decisions taken by Police Scotland about how to allocate its budget.

"While efforts are being made to involve partners in promoting better outcomes for detainees and communities, significant investment in the custody estate should be a priority as many current centres lack the facilities to cope with the challenges of modern policing or meet health and safety and human rights requirements.

"The challenge now is to drive improvement in the delivery of custody across Scotland but there remains a disconnect between the positive changes we witnessed at a strategic level and the service being delivered on the ground. It is important that the more remote custody centres and the thousands of detainees held in ancillary centres also benefit from the custody remodelling project and that there is consistency across the country.

"It appears that legacy cultures persist and some custody personnel are resistant to change. This is concerning, given that custody practice has evolved significantly and will continue to do so."

In its report, HMICS also encourages more transparency around custody provision. It recommends that data about custody is published, particularly around deaths in custody.

As HMICS reported last year, its ability to assess the support provided to vulnerable people is impeded by the lack of scrutiny of health services in custody facilities by Healthcare Improvement Scotland.

During this inspection, HMICS reviewed outstanding custody-related recommendations, closing 11 recommendations and 18 improvement actions. Police Scotland will be asked to create an action plan to address the 12 new recommendations contained within this report. HMICS will monitor progress against the plan and will continue to monitor progress against outstanding custody recommendations.

Ends

FOOTNOTE

Since 2013, HMICS has published seven police custody inspection reports. While the majority of the previous inspections focused on the treatment and conditions for detainees, this inspection focused on Police Scotland's strategic arrangements for the delivery of police custody. This included an assessment of leadership and governance of custody, planning and process, people, resources and partnership working.

Custody is regularly subject to external scrutiny by HMICS and independent custody visitors, both members of the UK's National Preventive Mechanism which monitors the treatment and conditions for detainees under international law.

Upon the creation of Police Scotland in 2013, a national Custody Division was established to promote consistency in custody centres across Scotland. This division merged with another in 2016 to become Criminal Justice Services Division. Currently there are 77 custody centres across Scotland, organised into 12 clusters. There are three types of custody centre – primary, weekend and ancillary. Primary centres are permanently staffed and open all the time, weekend centres operate between Friday and Monday and ancillary centres are used only when needed. Ancillary centres are staffed by local policing officers trained in custody while the other centres are staffed by personnel from CJSD.

Ends notes

NOTES TO EDITORS

The HMICS Inspection of the strategic arrangements for the delivery of police custody is available to download at the HMICS website www.hmics.scot from 1100hrs, Thursday, 6 June, 2019.

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