



HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland
Improving Policing across Scotland

Thursday, 04 April, 2024

PRESS RELEASE

Police custody in Dumfries and Galloway follow-up inspection

Healthcare providers at police custody centres in Dumfries and Galloway have improved their procedures for the prescribing, dispensing and administration of medicines.

They have also changed for the better the way they store medicines within the custody facilities.

Concerns had previously been raised following a joint custody inspection undertaken in June 2023 by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) and Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS).

The inspection had focussed on the primary custody centres within Dumfries and Stranraer police stations and had identified patient safety fears regarding the storage, supply and administration of medicines.

It identified issues at both locations where there appeared to be open access to medicines and limited control measures in place.

Inspectors had also been concerned that, at times, police custody staff rather than healthcare staff were being asked to select medicine from medication cupboards and prepare it into compliance aids for detainees at Dumfries police station.

In a report published in November 2023 inspectors recommended 14 improvements and requested Dumfries and Galloway Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) – the healthcare provider for the police custody centres – draw up an action plan to swiftly address the safety issues raised.

Now a new report published today (4 April 2024) reveals inspectors from HIS and HMICS revisited both Dumfries and Stranraer custody centres to carry out a progress inspection.

The purpose of the visit was to focus on the healthcare improvement action plan, with an emphasis on medication management, and did not involve further inspection of custody centre operations by police custody staff.

The follow-up inspection revealed considerable improvements had been made.

His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland, Mr Craig Naylor, said: "Having revisited the custody centres, spoken with healthcare staff, made observations, and examined the improvement action plan provided, we consider Dumfries and Galloway HSCP have implemented new protocols and introduced robust systems which better support the safe and effective use of medicines for detainees."

At their visit last June, inspectors had been concerned to find that the Dumfries and Galloway HSCP did not have the required licence in place for the storage and supply of controlled drugs at the centres, which is a legal obligation.

Healthcare providers have since taken the necessary steps to obtain the licence needed.

Mr Naylor added: "Inspectors have been informed that the HSCP applied to the Home Office for a controlled drugs licence in January 2024.

"Given the processes involved, it will take some time for this to be approved.

"HIS will continue to monitor progress to ensure that the appropriate licence is in place."

Police custody is a high-risk area of policing business and has been subject to considerable scrutiny by HMICS since Police Scotland was established.

Inspectors returned to the Dumfries and Galloway custody centres three months after they initially raised concerns, in accordance with an escalation protocol put in place.

While inspectors identified many examples of good practice on their revisit, they also found additional opportunities for further improvement in relation to the safe and effective use of medicines for detainees.

As a result, the new Progress Inspection Report recommends Dumfries and Galloway HSCP take additional action to ensure emergency medicines are securely kept somewhere that is more easily accessible for trained staff to quickly administer when needed, and that temperature sensitive medicines are stored correctly.

The new recommendations will be subject to future monitoring and review by HIS.

Ends

Notes

Places of detention, including police custody centres within the UK, are monitored as part of the human rights treaty: '*Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT)*'. Joint HMICS/HIS custody inspections focus on the delivery of custody services by Police Scotland and associated healthcare provision by NHS boards and Health and Social Care Partnerships across Scotland and are underpinned by the joint HIS and HMICS Framework to Inspect that ensures a consistent, objective and human rights-based approach to the collaborative work.

Dumfries and Galloway HSCP were provided with advance notice of the joint progress inspection which was carried out on 30 November 2023.

Ends notes

NOTES TO EDITORS

The HMICS Custody Progress Inspection Report – Dumfries and Galloway will be available to download at the HMICS website www.hmics.scot from 0001hrs, Thursday, 04 April, 2024.

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