



HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland
Improving Policing across Scotland

Tuesday, 14 December, 2021

PRESS RELEASE

Police custody centres in north east inspected

A culture of minimising the detention of individuals within the three main police custody facilities serving the North East of Scotland is well established and used appropriately, says a report published today (Tuesday, 14 December 2021).

An inspection of the custody centres in Aberdeen, Fraserburgh and Elgin highlights that individuals are only detained when it is absolutely necessary, and found that detention was appropriately authorised in all cases reviewed.

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland commends the professional approach of custody staff who make well informed decisions to determine if detention is required and reduce the time detainees spend in custody.

“This approach was facilitated by legislation and became more relevant when restrictions were introduced to limit the spread of Covid 19,” said Mrs Gill Imery, QPM. “The reduction, in the past year, in the total number of people detained can be partly attributed to the pandemic but also to Police Scotland’s positive approach to divert people away from custody through working more closely with partners to address reoffending by tackling the underlying causes and referring people to a range of services.”

HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland, she added: “Police custody is a high risk area of policing business and, as such, has been subject to considerable scrutiny by HMICS since Police Scotland was established with nine inspection reports being published.

“Police Scotland has made considerable progress in implementing recommendations and improvement actions in respect of custody services and are actively working to address those that remain outstanding.”

The variation in the physical condition of the custody buildings and the services provided are underlined in the report. Kittybrewster, in Aberdeen, is identified as being well laid out with full time health care and good liaison with support agencies. The Elgin premises, however, are in need of refurbishment with inconsistent healthcare provision which does not meet the needs of detainees, while Fraserburgh has benefitted from a recent refit and has adequate health service input.

HMICS observed thorough and robust risk assessments being carried out which were well informed and accurate with good care planning procedures in place.

The relatively new post of Criminal Justice Police Custody and Security Officer, which is a multi-skilled role, is having a positive impact on the functioning of the centres. But there are a number of vacancies for permanent staff at each of the custody centres with a reliance on local policing to fill the gaps.

HMICS has made three recommendations relating to healthcare provision, the risks presented by covering shifts with local policing officers and the efficiency of recording of information obtained during cell checks.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

This inspection is part of an on going programme of custody inspections which contribute to the UK's response to its international obligations under the Optional Protocol to the UN's Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT).

The inspection of the three centres were unannounced and took place in September 2021.

The report of HMICS North East Scotland Custody Inspection is available to download at the HMICS website www.hmics.scot

From 1100hrs, Tuesday, 14 December, 2021.

For any media enquiries please contact:

Susan Lumsden
HMICS Communications
07768 412 312
Susan.lumsden@gov.scot
Twitter: [@hmics](#)

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