



HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland
Improving Policing across Scotland

Thursday, 6th March, 2025

PRESS RELEASE

Police Custody in Greater Glasgow Inspected

A review of police custody facilities in Glasgow has raised concerns that a number of children were held in police cells for an “inappropriate” length of time.

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland and Healthcare Improvement Scotland carried out a joint inspection of the police custody centres at London Road, Govan and Cathcart police stations.

Inspectors examined a sample of 90 custody records from July last year which revealed five occasions where children had been held in police cells for longer than they deemed necessary.

On one occasion a 13-year-old was held in police custody for over six hours. Three children aged 14 years were held in custody for over six, 10 and 12 hours respectively. While a 16-year-old, who was subject to a supervision order, was held overnight for more than nine hours.

The HMICS report said in each case the youngsters had been charged with what they considered to be “minor offences”.

None of the youngsters in the sample of records reviewed were being held for court.

And the report notes there was no record on the Police Scotland National Custody System to indicate that a custody inspector was aware of – or had sanctioned – the detention decisions in relation to the youngsters.

HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland, Mr Craig Naylor, has called on Police Scotland to ensure decisions regarding children detained in police custody are subject to “robust management oversight”.

He has also recommended Police Scotland make sure such decisions are recorded appropriately.

He said: "The staff we spoke to highlighted that the custody division aimed to minimise the number of child arrests wherever possible, and to reduce the time spent in custody at the centres.

“However, our review of records highlighted anomalies in the length of time some children spent in custody.

“We consider holding children in a cell for the length of times we noted to be inappropriate, disproportionate to the offence, inconsistent with custody policy, and potentially detrimental to the child.

“None of these records contained a sufficient rationale to explain why it was necessary and proportionate to delay liberating the child.”

Inspectors from HMICS and HIS carried out an unannounced on-site inspection of the three custody centres in September 2024.

Between them the three custody centres have 145 cells.

The ‘HMICS Custody Inspection Report – Greater Glasgow’ noted the police custody centre at London Road featured a corridor of six cells dedicated for children and young people.

These had been modified and decorated with the intention of improving the environment when children were detained.

The station also contained a separate ‘discrete charge bar’ which was reserved for processing children and young people, and other vulnerable detainees.

There was a video information screen where an informative and age-appropriate, 10-minute video could be shown to young detainees, describing the custody facility and clarifying detainee rights and expectations.

The transformation of the area had been part-funded by a third sector agency, on the basis that the centre could be used as a default destination for young detainees.

Local policing officers had initially been encouraged to use the facility if they arrested a child.

But the inspectors were informed the police station was no longer used as the default location for children and young people in the Greater Glasgow and surrounding areas to be taken when arrested.

The report states: “We found no rationale to explain why this facility was not being used as initially intended.”

The HMICS inspection report made six recommendations for improvement – four to Police Scotland, and a further two to Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership which provides police custody healthcare on behalf of NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde.

The aim of the joint inspection was to assess the treatment of, and conditions for, individuals detained at the three primary custody centres in Glasgow.

Inspectors reviewed the Police Scotland National Custody System (NCS) and examined a representative sample of detainees processed at the custody centres during July 2024.

They assessed the physical environment, including the quality of cells, and observed key processes and procedures relevant to police custody operations.

They also spoke with people detained at the custody centres and interviewed custody staff and healthcare professionals during their visit.

Inspectors said the provision of healthcare within each of the custody centres was found to be good.

They interviewed eight detainees across the inspection, who each gave complimentary feedback about their treatment by custody staff and the arresting officers.

In each centre, separated corridors enabled gender or age-based segregation, which were routinely utilised for detainees.

And the inspectors found prisoner property arrangements to be well-managed and in good order.

However, the report noted both custody staff and local policing officers had described custody staffing shortages as “very challenging” and said they frequently operated under the operational base levels required.

They described occasions where just one sergeant may be responsible for supervising the care and wellbeing of 40 detainees, in addition to making criminal justice decisions about new business, reviews and disposals.

Staff also said there were low levels of management visibility, as several senior officers within the custody division worked from home and some worked compressed hours.

The HMICS report recommended Police Scotland should examine the staffing levels at the custody centres in Glasgow and make arrangements to ensure appropriate staffing levels are in place to maintain safe and effective custody centre operations.

The report also said Police Scotland should make sure an appropriate level of management presence is maintained at custody centres.

As with other recent custody inspection reports, the Greater Glasgow report highlighted concerns regarding a lack of consistency in the recording of information.

Mr Naylor said: “We have continued to find disparities, in some cases, between the risk assessments undertaken and the corresponding care plans put in place to mitigate risk.

“Similarly, we found a lack of quality assurance of operational practice taking place – an issue which we have raised previously and have made a recommendation for improvement.”

He added: “While recommendations outlined in this report have specific relevance for Glasgow custody centres, some will be equally applicable to other custody centres across Scotland and should be considered in future improvement planning by Police Scotland’s Criminal Justice Services Division.”

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)’.

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 detainee treatment and conditions. HMICS is one of several bodies making up the NPM in the UK.

Ends notes

NOTES TO EDITORS

The ‘HMICS Custody Inspection Report – Greater Glasgow’ will be available to download at the [HMICS website](#) from 00.01hrs, Thursday, 6th March, 2025.

For any media enquiries please contact:

Jenny Morrison

HMICS Communications Manager

hmic@hmic.gov.scot

X: [@hmics](#)

Ends