



HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland
Improving Policing across Scotland

Tuesday, 31 January, 2023

PRESS RELEASE

Report finds wide variation in healthcare for people in police custody across Scotland

A new national report on access to healthcare for people in police custody has found a lack of consistency in care depending on geographical location.

The report follows on from a review of the provision of care across the country. The aim of the review was to help shape plans for future inspections of police custody centres by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland and Healthcare Improvement Scotland, the joint authors of today's report. Many people brought into police custody tend to be vulnerable, have experienced trauma and have health problems. People who had experience of police custody were interviewed to help understand which areas of healthcare matter most to them.

The report outlines examples of good practice and makes a number of recommendations, including nationally agreed waiting time standards for the assessment and treatment of individuals detained in police custody centres, and the development of up-to-date guidance on the delivery of police custody healthcare.

The review found:

- wide variation across Scotland in access to healthcare for people in police custody
- a lack of consistency and equity in relation to service provision, speed of access to a healthcare professional and timely interventions
- improvement is needed around the recording and analysis of clinical data, to support effective planning of healthcare service provision for people in custody.

Responsibility for the provision of healthcare in custody centres transferred from Police Scotland to NHS Scotland in 2014. Governance and oversight of healthcare to police custody centres is retained by individual NHS boards and Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCP) across Scotland.

Lynsey Cleland, Quality Assurance Director at Healthcare Improvement Scotland, said:

“Evidence suggests that people who have offended, or who are at risk of offending, frequently experience multiple and complex health issues such as mental and physical health problems, learning disabilities and substance use, and are at increased risk of premature morbidity. It is vital that people’s health needs are met in the custody setting and that help with routes into treatment or other support is available for those who need it. We believe that this report and the future inspections will help ensure greater consistency in care for people across the country.”

Craig Naylor, HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, said:

“The variability of healthcare raises challenges for Police Scotland. Gaps in healthcare within a custody centre can result in staff having to make decisions about a person’s healthcare needs – such as whether they require hospital treatment – without the benefit of clinical advice. We hope this report and the subsequent inspections will help ensure that those in police custody get the care they need.”

Ends notes

Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) are working together to take forward a framework to inspect healthcare provision within police custody centres across Scotland.

HIS is responsible for supporting healthcare providers to deliver high quality care and scrutinising those services to provide public assurance about the quality and safety of that care.

HMICS provides independent scrutiny of both Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority (SPA). They support Police Scotland and the SPA to deliver services that are high quality, continually improving, effective and responsive to local needs. They can inspect other UK police services that operate in Scotland and are members of the National Preventive Mechanism, inspecting police custody centres to monitor the treatment and conditions for detainees.

NOTES TO EDITORS

The National baseline review of healthcare provision within police custody centres in Scotland is available to download at the HMICS website www.hmics.scot from 1100hrs, Tuesday, 31 January 2023.

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