



HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland
Improving Policing across Scotland

Thursday, 20th July, 2023

PRESS RELEASE

Police Custody in Tayside Inspected

The police custody centre serving Tayside is managed by professional and respectful staff but the layout of the facility presents them with a number of challenges.

A report published today (Thursday, July 20, 2023) highlighted that the unconventional split-level layout of the Dundee centre impacted on the efficiency and effectiveness of the booking-in process for detainees.

The joint inspection by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) and Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) also identified that the need for custody officers to staff an adjacent public enquiry counter impacted on their ability to prioritise key duties at the centre.

The second joint onsite inspection by the two scrutiny bodies, it aimed to assess the treatment of, and conditions for, individuals detained at the custody centre. It will inform planning for future joint inspections.

Angus Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) has responsibility for the provision of healthcare services at the site and the report contains eight recommendations for either Police Scotland or the HSCP.

HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, Craig Naylor, said: "Whilst recommendations in this report have specific relevance for the Dundee custody centre, we recognise that some will be equally applicable to other custody centres across Scotland and should be taken into account in improvement planning.

“We highlighted the need for the HSCP to share written information with the custody centre in respect of detainee care plans and healthcare interventions and to review the pathway for secondary mental health assessments for detainees in collaboration with partner organisations.

“The booking-in process was lengthy and needed to be improved upon. Transfer practice at the custody centre needed to ensure that health information was included where relevant. Custody staff could also benefit from additional training and awareness to help them better understand the complex issues and challenges experienced by those in custody.”

The provision of onsite healthcare at the custody facility was considered to be good, especially in terms of close working with the custody staff and external healthcare providers. However there was no clear process for accessing secondary mental health assessments, especially for those requiring hospital admission.

In addition, the separate IT systems used by Police Scotland and the NHS did not allow information sharing, required verbal updates to be provided and led to gaps when detainees were transported to another facility.

Half of those detained at Dundee spent less than 12 hours in custody with a third there for less than six hours. However, due to limited cell capacity at Dundee Sheriff Court, those held for a court appearance could, at times, be detained for significantly longer.

The cells were clean and functional, although they would provide a challenge for anyone with mobility issues. Inspectors found particularly good practice in place in respect of undertaking risk assessments, care planning and observation levels for detainees.

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 11 reports published. These reports remain relevant as Police Scotland continues to address recommendations made. The service has made considerable progress with implementing previous recommendations and improvement actions in respect of custody centres and is working to address those that remain outstanding.

Ends

Notes

This inspection, which was unannounced and took place in March 2023, involved the analysis of a sample of custody records relating to 42 people detained at the custody centre, interviews with detainees and staff during the inspection and an assessment of the premises, including the quality of the cells, key processes and procedures.

The Dundee custody centre is the sole full-time custody centre for Tayside and forms part of the West Bell Street police station. Nursing staff are available onsite 24/7.

HMICS has developed a custody inspection programme in partnership with HIS which will comprise three joint inspections in 2023-24 with the first taking place at the primary custody centres in Dumfries and Galloway.

The inspection contributed to the UK's response to its international obligations under the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment of Punishment (OPCAT). OPCAT requires that all places of detention are visited regularly by 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 Tayside Custody Inspection Report will be available for download on the HMICS website www.hmics.scot from 1100 hrs on Thursday, 20th July, 2023.

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