



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

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POLICE CUSTODY IN HEATHROW – GENERALLY POSITIVE

Police custody provision in Heathrow was generally sound, said Nick Hardwick, Chief Inspector of Prisons, and Dru Sharpling, HM Inspector of Constabulary, publishing the report of an inspection into custody suites in Heathrow.

The unannounced inspection was part of a national programme of joint inspections of police custody and covered the 24-hour custody suite at Heathrow, which dealt with people arrested at Heathrow airport. Overall, there were some areas of good practice and a small number of areas for improvement.

Inspectors were pleased to find that:

- there was clear commitment to custody provision by the operational command unit commander;
- the facilities were modern and well maintained;
- interactions with detainees were generally appropriate;
- an appropriate balance was maintained between progressing cases and the rights of individuals, and the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) was adhered to;
- juveniles and vulnerable adults were well served by an appropriate adult scheme during the day; and

- health care provision was adequate and mental health diversion services were well developed.

However, inspectors were concerned to find that:

- staffing was a mixture of permanent and temporary staff, and not everyone working in custody was adequately trained;
- as elsewhere, there was a lack of appropriate monitoring of the use of force, both locally and London-wide;
- the new prisoner escort service was causing delays and police facilities were being inappropriately used to hold remanded prisoners;
- the management of health and safety issues needed to be improved and some risk assessment and management system were inconsistent; and
- the attendance of forensic medical examiners (FMEs) was sometimes subject to delay.

Nick Hardwick and Dru Sharpling said:

“Overall, custody provision in Heathrow was generally sound. This report sets out a small number of recommendations that we hope will assist the MPS and the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime to improve the facilities further. We expect our findings to be considered in the wider context of priorities and resourcing, and for an action plan to be provided in due course.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. A copy of the full report can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Prisons website from 31 January 2012 at <http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/inspectorate-reports/hmi-prisons/police-cell/index.htm>.
2. HM Inspectorate of Prisons is an independent inspectorate, inspecting places of detention to report on conditions and treatment, and promote positive outcomes for those detained and the public.

3. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) is an independent inspectorate, inspecting policing in the public interest, and rigorously examines the efficiency and effectiveness of police forces and authorities to tackle crime and terrorism, improve criminal justice and raise confidence. HMIC inspects and regulates all 43 police forces in England and Wales together with other major policing bodies such as the Serious Organised Crime Agency, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the British Transport Police and HMRC.
4. This joint inspection was carried out from 3-5 October 2011.
5. The Metropolitan Police Authority was replaced by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPC) on 16 January 2012.
6. Please contact Jane Parsons (HMI Prisons press office) on 020 7035 2123 or 07880 787452 or Ruth Allman (HMIC Press Office) on 020 3513 0600 if you would like more information or to request an interview.