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POLICE CUSTODY IN HUMBERSIDE – GOOD OVERALL

Police custody provision in Humberside was generally well managed, but some issues needed attention, said Nick Hardwick, Chief Inspector of Prisons, and Dru Sharpling, HM Inspector of Constabulary, publishing the report of an unannounced inspection.

The inspection was part of a national programme of joint inspections of police custody. It covered six custody suites, operating 24 hours a day, in Grimsby, Scunthorpe, Bridlington, Goole, Hull Queens Gardens and Hull Priory Road, as well as a further standby custody suite in Beverley. Overall there were some areas of excellent practice, but some areas which still needed to be addressed.

Inspectors were pleased to find that:

- there was good strategic leadership of custody, assisted by a positive relationship with the Police Authority and an active independent custody visitors scheme;
- there was a good focus on learning lessons, but quality assurance procedures needed to be improved;
- arrangements for dealing with juveniles at Priory Road, Hull were good practice but there was mixed awareness of some other diversity issues,
- staff interactions with detainees were professional and risk assessments were good;

- an appropriate balance was maintained between progressing cases and the rights of individuals; and
- management of the contract with the health provider was robust and should be seen as good practice.

However, there were some concerns:

- there was a lack of appropriate monitoring of the use of force;
- the physical environment of the suites was mixed – most cells were clean but there was too much graffiti and a number of ligature points in cells;
- arrangements for providing appropriate adults were good for juveniles but less so for vulnerable adults; and
- despite some progress being made with mental health diversion, there were too many detainees being held under section 136 of the Mental Health Act.

Nick Hardwick and Dru Sharpling said:

“Overall, police custody provision in Humberside was well managed. Detainees were generally well treated and their rights respected. This report provides a small number of recommendations to assist the force and the Police Authority to improve provision 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 9 May 2012 at <http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/inspectorate-reports/hmi-prisons/police-cell>
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 3-6 January 2012.
5. Section 136 enables a police officer to remove someone from a public place and take them to a place of safety – for example, a police station. It also states clearly that the purpose of being taken to the place of safety is to enable the person to be examined by a doctor and interviewed by an approved social worker, and for the making of any necessary arrangements for treatment or care.
6. Please contact Jane Parsons (HMIP 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.