



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

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POLICE CUSTODY IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE – GOOD OVERALL

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

The unannounced inspection was part of a national programme of joint inspections of police custody and covered the four 24-hour custody suites at Campbell Square, Weston Favell, Wellingborough and Corby, as well as the standby custody suites at Kettering and Daventry. Overall, there were some areas of excellent practice and a few areas for improvement.

Inspectors were pleased to find that:

- there was sound oversight at a strategic level for custody provision, a clear and robust management structure and good management information produced and used;
- staff interactions with detainees were professional, with a good focus on their care and welfare;
- initial risk assessments were sound, and health and safety procedures were well established;
- use of handcuffs was proportionate, and there was a process for recording use of force in custody and learning;

- an appropriate balance was maintained between progressing cases and the rights of individuals; and
- there was effective support for detainees who were substance users and excellent specialist mental health provision.

However, inspectors were concerned to find that:

- the arrangements for sharing cells with the courts needed attention to ensure a clear demarcation of responsibility and accountability;
- the physical environment of the suites was mixed;
- staff development was needed to raise awareness of the specific needs of some groups who are particularly vulnerable; and
- the number of Mental Health Act section 136 detainees held in police custody was high and needed addressing.

Nick Hardwick and Dru Sharpling said:

“Overall, police custody provision in Northamptonshire was good. There was clear strategic direction and management support and a culture of learning and respect among custody staff. 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 28 February 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 31 October – 3 November 2011.
5. 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.