



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

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POLICE CUSTODY IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE – POOR

Police custody provision in Nottinghamshire was poor overall, although staff interacted well with detainees, said Nick Hardwick, Chief Inspector of Prisons, and Dru Sharpling, HM Inspector of Constabulary, publishing the report of an inspection into custody suites in Nottinghamshire.

The unannounced inspection was part of a national programme of joint inspections of police custody and covered three 24-hour custody suites, Nottingham Bridewell, Mansfield and Worksop.

Inspectors were concerned to find that:

- management arrangements were convoluted, leading to confusion among staff;
- quality assurance checks were minimal, which meant risks were potentially not identified and remedial action not taken;
- the suite at Nottingham was filthy and covered in unpleasant graffiti, with little evidence of a regular cleaning regime;
- the use of a padded cell at Nottingham was of concern, though this had been taken out of commission;
- the quality and consistency of risk assessments needed improvements to ensure the safety of detainees;
- health and safety procedures were inconsistent and the quality of CCTV needed improvement;

- clinical governance arrangements needed improvement and medical rooms were dirty; and
- police custody was too often being used to detain people under Section 136 of the Mental Health Act.

However, inspectors were pleased to find that:

- there was a positive relationship with the Police Authority and an active independent custody visitors scheme;
- interactions between staff and detainees were respectful and appropriate;
- use of handcuffs was proportionate;
- an appropriate balance was maintained between progressing cases and the rights of individuals, and the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) was generally adhered to; and
- primary health care provision was generally good and drug misuse services were generally sound.

Nick Hardwick and Dru Sharpling said:

“Overall, police custody in Nottinghamshire was poor. The environment at Nottingham was unacceptable, and management, quality assurance and risk management arrangements needed urgent attention. We gave the force immediate feedback after our inspection and we are pleased to note they responded quickly and effectively to our concerns. We expect this progress to be sustained and this report provides a number of recommendations to assist the force and the Police Authority to improve the provision of custody in Nottinghamshire. 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 11 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 unannounced joint inspection was carried out from 30 August – 2 September 2011.
5. 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.