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**POLICE CUSTODY IN LANCASHIRE –
IMPRESSIVE MENTAL HEALTH ARRANGEMENTS**

Police custody provision in Lancashire was largely positive, with exceptional work undertaken in mental health, said Nick Hardwick, Chief Inspector of Prisons, and Dru Sharpling, HM Inspector of Constabulary, publishing the report of a joint unannounced inspection into custody suites in Lancashire.

The inspection was part of a national programme of joint inspections of police custody and covered seven custody suites serving Lancashire (Lancaster, Blackpool, Preston, Skelmersdale, Blackburn, Burnley and Leyland). Overall, there were some areas of excellent practice, as well as a few areas which needed to be addressed.

Inspectors were pleased to find that:

- strategic leadership of custody arrangements was clear, with good liaison between the force and the policy authority and an active independent custody visitors scheme;
- multi-agency working with detainees with mental health problems was exceptional, with a co-ordinator employed by all agencies who ensured consistency of standards and efficiency across the force, and sophisticated policies and procedures;

- there was a positive approach to balancing the priorities of progressing investigations with the rights of detainees, and a good focus on alternatives to custody; and
- detainee health care was generally good.

However, there were some concerns:

- custody detention officers did not sufficiently engage with detainees to ensure risks were effectively identified;
- some cells needed deep cleaning and graffiti removed; and
- while police staff were professional in their dealings with detainees, custody detention officers employed by G4S were less so.

Nick Hardwick and Dru Sharpling said:

“We have made a small number of recommendations which we hope will help the force address the concerns we have identified. Dealing with detainees with mental health problems is a challenge to many forces and a significant call on resources. We suggest that Lancashire’s impressive approach to tackling this issue may therefore be of interest to other forces.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. A copy of the full report can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Prisons website from 1 September 2011 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. HM Inspectorate of Constabulary is an independent inspectorate, inspecting policing in the public interest, and rigorously examines the 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 and the British Transport Police and HMRC.
4. This joint inspection was carried out from 18-21 April 2011.

5. Please contact Angharad Thomas (HMIC Press Office) on 020 3513 0600 if you would like more information or to request an interview.