



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

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POLICE CUSTODY IN SUSSEX – WELL MANAGED

Police custody provision in Sussex was good, with well trained staff and good strategic leadership, said Nick Hardwick, Chief Inspector of Prisons, and Dru Sharpling, HM Inspector of Constabulary, publishing the report of a joint inspection into custody suites in Sussex.

The inspection was part of a national programme of joint inspections of police custody and covered six custody suites serving Chichester, Worthing, Crawley, Hastings, Eastbourne and Brighton. Overall, there were some areas of excellent practice. However there were also a small number of areas for improvement.

Inspectors were pleased to find that:

- as well as good strategic leadership for the custodial function, there was solid support from the Police Authority and significant long-term investment in the custodial estate;
- staff, including privately contracted custody staff, were well trained and motivated;
- there were excellent management information systems, with sound learning from adverse incidents;
- interactions between staff and detainees were professional, basic decency issues properly attended to and appropriate attention paid to

the needs of different groups of detainees, such as women and children;

- a positive approach was taken to balancing the priorities of progressing cases and ensuring detainees' rights under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE);
- the management of forensic samples was generally sound; and
- there were good mental health services.

However, there were some concerns:

- custody suites were clean, but some cells contained ligature points, which required remedial work and appropriate management;
- the quality of privately contracted health care services provided by Reliance was mixed, and substance misuse services required better coordination; and
- despite links with the relevant NHS authorities, police custody was too often used as 'place of safety' under the Mental Health Act.

Nick Hardwick and Dru Sharpling said:

“Overall, this is a good inspection report on a force which has paid appropriate attention to developing its custodial provision and managing the inherent risks posed. The report sets out a small number of recommendations that we hope will assist the Chief Constable and the Police Authority to improve the quality of custody provision still further. We expect them to consider these in the wider context of force priorities and resourcing, and to provide us with an action plan 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 2 June 2011 at www.justice.gov.uk/inspectors/hmi-prisons

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 7-11 February 2011.
5. Please contact Ruth Allman or Angharad Thomas (HMIC Press Office) on 020 3513 0600 if you would like more information or to request an interview.