



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

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**CAMBRIDGESHIRE POLICE CUSTODY – INSPECTION REVEALED POOR
CONDITIONS**

Inspections of police custody suites in Cambridgeshire exposed poor conditions and a lack of strategic management, according to a report jointly published by HM Inspectorate of Prisons and HM Inspectorate of Constabulary.

Inspectors were disappointed by a lack of effective strategic attention to custodial issues and found some very weak custody arrangements. There had been little meaningful progress to rectify the problems of hygiene and safety identified in the force's own internal audit. They found:

- there were no clear policies, staff were confused and some inadequately trained, and basic command unit commanders had different approaches
- many cells were not fit for purpose and there were numerous safety hazards, including ligature points
- at Cambridge, inspectors observed some staff displaying an unprofessional and uncaring approach, particularly in dealing with vulnerable detainees and the provision of food
- widespread evidence of systemic failings in the handling, storing and destruction of forensic and DNA samples

- poor healthcare, with weak cleanliness and infection control and poor multi-agency cooperation to manage vulnerable people, except for good psychiatric links in Peterborough.

Dame Anne Owers, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons said:

“This independent inspection of the police custody suites of Cambridgeshire Constabulary exposed considerable shortfalls in many aspects of strategic management and service delivery. Urgent improvement was required to bring these suites up to a satisfactory standard”.

Kate Flannery, HM Inspector of Constabulary said:

“As the regional HM Inspector of Constabulary, this has been referred to me for on-going monitoring on the large number of recommendations that were made, in order to reassure ourselves and the public that expeditious improvements have been made to the unsatisfactory custody provision currently provided by Cambridgeshire Constabulary.”

Notes for Editors

1. A copy of the full report can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Prisons website from 4 August 2009 at <http://inspectors.justice.gov.uk/hmiprisons>.
2. The independent inspection of Cambridgeshire police custody suites was carried out from 24-26 November 2008.
3. Cambridgeshire Constabulary has eight custody suites designated for the reception of detainees under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, 1984.
4. Anne Owers, Chief Inspector, is available for interview. If you would like to speak to her please contact Nilima Fox in the Press Office on 0203 334 3525.
5. Kate Flannery, Her Majesty's Inspector, is also available for interviews. Please contact Sharon Kalina at the HMIC press office on 0207 035 2712.