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### **THIRD JOINT INSPECTION REPORT ON POLICE CUSTODY SUITES**

Today, the Chief Inspector of Prisons, Anne Owers and the Chief Inspector of Constabulary, Denis O'Connor, publish their third joint inspection report on conditions and treatment in police custody, undertaken into two police custody suites (PCS) in the Hillingdon Borough of the Metropolitan Police Service: the main suite in Uxbridge and a smaller facility in West Drayton.

This is part of a series of inspections to examine the treatment and conditions in police detention, in line with the UK's international obligations to ensure regular and independent inspection of all places of detention.

The inspectors found that that custody staff implemented the requirements of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) codes professionally and consistently. They received no complaints from detainees, their families or their legal representatives.

However, they noted the absence of specialist and dedicated custodial staff, and the need for improved systems to collate and analyse any complaints. There was no evidence of any assessment of risk at the point of release, and one woman said that she had been released at 3.30am to make her way home.

They found risk assessments on arrival were carried out thoroughly, and determined the location and observation of detainees. They saw good interaction between staff and detainees, beyond the minimum required, and considerable individual care. The cells were clean, though in need of decoration and not always sufficiently warm.

There was also inconsistency in relation to the personal items detainees were allowed, including necessities such as spectacles, and not all detainees were told they could have essential items like blankets, towels and toilet paper. Showers were rarely offered, and their location meant that there was insufficient privacy for female detainees. There was very little for detainees to do, and visits were not allowed.

Other common themes from previous inspections emerged. There was little privacy for the disclosure of confidential information, and no specific policies or procedures for dealing with young people or women.

Similarly, in relation to immigration detainees, there was a need for the UK Border Agency to exercise much greater control over the length of stay, and the conditions of custody, for immigration detainees held on its behalf. While the forensic medical examiners provided a reasonable service, there was a lack of clinical governance, and inconsistencies in record-keeping. There were, however, good arrangements for mental health assessments.

Anne Owers and Denis O'Connor said:

“These inspections in three different London boroughs have proved very valuable in providing independent confirmation of the many elements of good practice in custody suites, as well as revealing a number of common areas for development and improvement, which the Metropolitan Police’s Custody Directorate will wish to consider in moving towards best practice.”

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

1. A full copy of the joint report into Hillingdon PCS is available from <http://inspectors.justice.gov.uk/hmiprisons/>
2. The Metropolitan Police Service has 76 custody suites designated under PACE for the reception of detainees.
3. The joint inspection took place between 23 – 25 June 2008
4. Anne Owers is available for media interviews. Please call 0203 334 3527 to arrange an interview.

