



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

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POLICE CUSTODY IN HAMMERSMITH AND FULHAM - DISAPPOINTING

Police custody provision in Hammersmith and Fulham needed to see some improvements, said Nick Hardwick, Chief Inspector of Prisons, and Dru Sharpling, HM Inspector of Constabulary, publishing the report of an inspection into custody suites in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham.

The inspection was part of a national programme of joint inspections of police custody and covered the custody suites at Fulham and Hammersmith as well as the overflow custody suite at Shepherds Bush. Overall, there were some areas of good practice, but several important areas which needed to be addressed.

Inspectors were concerned to find that:

- strategic oversight needed improvement, with inconsistent staffing arrangements, utilising permanent staff and shift relief staff;
- management of health and safety issues was inadequate;
- there was limited attention to diversity and particular vulnerabilities;
- arrangements for managing DNA needed attention;
- healthcare provision was in need of improvement with delays in the attendance of forensic medical examiners (FMEs);
- there was a lack of effective clinical governance and medicines management arrangements were poor; and

- there was a lack of appropriate monitoring of the use of force in the custody environment.

However, inspectors were pleased to find that:

- the independent custody visitors' (ICV) scheme was working well;
- cell inspections showed no ligature points and cell bells were responded to promptly;
- an appropriate balance was maintained between progressing cases and the rights of individuals, and the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) was adhered to;
- legal advice was readily available;
- substance misuse services were good; and
- there were no mental health in-reach services, but effective arrangements for section 136 patients with the local NHS hospital.

Nick Hardwick and Dru Sharpling said:

“Overall, custody provision in Hammersmith and Fulham was disappointing and needed improvement. This reports sets out a number of recommendations that we hope will assist the Metropolitan Police Service and Metropolitan Police Authority to improve provision within the borough. 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 23 November 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. 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 4-7 July 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.