



Police custody good practice examples

Updated 19 November 2013

In 2008, HM Inspectorate of Prisons and HM Inspectorate of Constabulary began a programme of joint inspections of police custody suites in England and Wales. These inspections form part of a wider programme of joint work by criminal justice inspectorates. The inspections make sure that the UK complies with its international obligations to carry out regular independent inspection of all places of custody.

In line with standard inspection methodologies, the two inspectorates have devised detailed inspection criteria, and assess the practice found in police custody against these expectations. These criteria provide a transparent basis against which inspectors will assess the treatment and conditions of those people detained in police custody. They also offer a guide to senior police officers and Police and Crime Commissioners as to the standards that the two inspectorates expect to find in these settings. The evidence-based criteria also set out sources of information for senior officers and Police and Crime Commissioners.

The criteria or expectations are informed by, and referenced against, the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) codes (1984), and ACPO/Home Office guidance on the safer detention and handling of people in police custody. The criteria are based on the many years' experience of the two inspectorates, and referenced against international human rights legislation.

These expectations are broken down into four distinct areas: 'Strategy', 'Treatment and Conditions', 'Individual Rights' and 'Healthcare'. They are set at the level that ensures best practice which is determined by the independent Chief Inspectors of Prisons and Constabulary. Where inspectors have found evidence of good practice during inspections, this is highlighted in the relevant inspection report. As examples of good practice can benefit others, it is important that they are easily accessible and shared widely so that they can help to improve outcomes for detained people.

For the purpose of this document, good practice is defined as: 'Impressive practice that not only meets or exceeds our expectations, but could be followed by other forces to achieve positive outcomes for detainees'.

Below is a summary of this good practice, as highlighted in the published inspection reports (December 2010 onwards). Further details can be found in the full inspection reports or from the relevant force or Metropolitan Police Service borough. New examples of good practice will be added as and when they are identified.

Strategy

| Date of inspection | Force/ MPS BOCU | Subject/ tags | Good practice | Review date | Link to inspection report |
|--------------------|------------------|--|--|----------------|---|
| February 2011 | Sussex | Use of force recording/lessons learned | The use of force was well recorded and monitored for trends, and any significant incident in custody was recorded and scrutinised for lessons to be learned. (3.11) | January 2014 | http://www.hmic.gov.uk/media/sussex-police-custody-suites-joint-inspection-20110602.pdf |
| March 2011 | West Yorkshire | Inspections/thematic /good practice | The unannounced thematic custody inspections provided an excellent quality assurance process, identifying good practice and raising standards. (3.11) | January 2014 | http://www.hmic.gov.uk/media/west-yorkshire-custody-suites-joint-inspection-revisit-201107201.pdf |
| April 2012 | Norfolk/ Suffolk | Collaboration | Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies shared a clear strategic vision with regard to collaborating on the provision of custody services. (3.14) | April 2014 | http://www.hmic.gov.uk/media/norfolk-suffolk-joint-inspection-custody-suites.pdf |
| April 2012 | Norfolk/ Suffolk | Roles within custody | The implementation and application of the standard operating procedures by managers provided clarity of role and consistency in the provision of custody services. (3.15) | April 2014 | http://www.hmic.gov.uk/media/norfolk-suffolk-joint-inspection-custody-suites.pdf |
| April 2012 | Norfolk/ Suffolk | Quality Assurance processes | The quality assurance processes were comprehensive and well structured, particularly in regard to cross-referencing rousing in custody records to closed-circuit television dip-sampling, and also the dip-sampling by custody inspectors of the custody records of other PICs. (3.16) | April 2014 | http://www.hmic.gov.uk/media/norfolk-suffolk-joint-inspection-custody-suites.pdf |
| April 2012 | Norfolk/ Suffolk | Audit and Inspection | The audit and inspection programme ensured that consistency and corporacy of custody provision was achieved and maintained at a high level. (3.17) | April 2014 | http://www.hmic.gov.uk/media/norfolk-suffolk-joint-inspection-custody-suites.pdf |
| September 2012 | Gwent | Analysis of near miss information | Effective analysis of the near-miss information produced useful management information to identify trends, which was available to all custody staff. (3.18) | September 2014 | http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/inspectorate-reports/hmipris/police-cell-inspections/gwent-2012.pdf |

Treatment and Conditions

| Date of inspection | Force/ MPS BOCU | Subject/ tags | Good practice | Review date | Link to inspection report |
|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|--|-------------|---|
| March 2011 | West Yorkshire | Booking-in/privacy | The private booking-in cubicle at Keighley offered detainees an enhanced level of privacy. (4.7) | March 2014 | http://www.hmic.gov.uk/media/west-yorkshire-custody-suites-joint-inspection-revisit-201107201.pdf |
| April 2012 | Norfolk/ Suffolk | Handovers | Handovers were conducted away from the booking-in area, were well prepared, managed and effective, and involved all relevant custody staff. (4.21) | April 2014 | http://www.hmic.gov.uk/media/norfolk-suffolk-joint-inspection-custody-suites.pdf |
| June 2013 | Dyfed-Powys | Mattresses | The good stock of thick mattresses at Haverfordwest and Aberystwyth provided for the comfort of elderly, pregnant and disabled detainees. (4.3) | June 2015 | http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/inspectorate-reports/hmipris/police-cell-inspections/dyfed-powys-report-2013.pdf |

Individual Rights

| Date of inspection | Force/ MPS BOCU | Subject/ tags | Good practice | Review date | Link to inspection report |
|--------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|---|-------------|---|
| March 2011 | MPS Borough of Sutton | Pre-release risk assessment | The detailed pre-release risk assessment prompt sheet provided to custody sergeants resulted in some excellent assessments of detainees before their release. (5.5) | March 2014 | http://www.hmic.gov.uk/media/metropolitan-police-service-sutton-custody-suites-joint-inspection-20110615.pdf |
| May 2013 | Derbyshire | Lessons learnt from complaints | Lessons learned from the investigation of complaints about treatment in custody were disseminated to staff through a regular custody bulletin. (5.24) | May 2015 | http://www.hmic.gov.uk/media/derbyshire-joint-inspection-of-custody-suites-20130927.pdf |

Healthcare

| Date of inspection | Force/ MPS BOCU | Subject/ tags | Good practice | Review date | Link to inspection report |
|--------------------|------------------|--|---|----------------|---|
| December 2010 | Kent | Mental health/section 136 | Mental health champions in all BCUs provided a dedicated focus, at a senior level, to address mental health problems and a point of contact for any mental health issues in that area, which were then discussed at regular meetings. (6.23) | December 2013 | http://www.hmic.gov.uk/media/kent-custody-suites-joint-inspection-20110404.pdf |
| April 2011 | Lancashire | Mental health | There was exceptional multi-agency working to support people entering the criminal justice system who had mental health issues. (6.28) | April 2013 | http://www.hmic.gov.uk/media/lancashire-custody-suites-joint-inspection-20110901.pdf |
| April 2012 | Norfolk/ Suffolk | Storage of medication | The provision of individual storage lockers for detainees' medications ensured that medicines were stored securely and minimised the risk of confusing different individuals' medications. (6.13) | April 2014 | http://www.hmic.gov.uk/media/norfolk-suffolk-joint-inspection-custody-suites.pdf |
| September 2012 | Gwent | Location of pocket masks for resuscitation | The pocket masks stuck to the wall above each cell door was an effective initiative which meant that anybody could commence safe resuscitation immediately if required. (6.9) | September 2014 | http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/inspectorate-reports/hmipris/police-cell-inspections/gwent-2012.pdf |
| September 2012 | Gwent | Management of Section 136 data | The section 136 database was impressive. It gave an overview across both custody and health, and could be used to monitor trends and identify individuals who were detained repeatedly so that their care could be assessed or reviewed. It was an exemplar to other forces. (6.34) | September 2014 | http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/inspectorate-reports/hmipris/police-cell-inspections/gwent-2012.pdf |

Healthcare (continued)

| Date of inspection | Force/ MPS BOCU | Subject/ tags | Good practice | Review date | Link to inspection report |
|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|---|---------------|---|
| October 2012 | Merseyside | Care plans | The use of advanced care plans enabled an agreed plan of care to be instituted when an individual re-entered custody. (6.25) | October 2014 | http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/inspectorate-reports/hmipris/police-cell-inspections/merseyside-2012.pdf |
| October 2012 | Merseyside | Diversion from custody | The MerseyCare diversion-from-custody scheme enabled early withdrawal of the mentally ill from the criminal justice system. (6.31) | October 2014 | http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/inspectorate-reports/hmipris/police-cell-inspections/merseyside-2012.pdf |
| December 2012 | Haringey | Medical examiners peer review | Peer review by forensic medical examiners was an excellent initiative to assure and improve safe clinical practice and prepare for medical revalidation. (6.12) | December 2014 | http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/inspectorate-reports/hmipris/police-cell-inspections/haringey-2012.pdf |
| December 2012 | Haringey | Medicine management | Medicine stock balances were monitored and recorded daily and weekly on detailed spreadsheets, which provided a strong audit trail. (6.24) | December 2014 | http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/inspectorate-reports/hmipris/police-cell-inspections/haringey-2012.pdf |
| May 2013 | Derbyshire | Joint working | The joint working between the police, arrest referral workers and health services staff to obtain detainees medications, including opiate substitution therapy, to maintain continuity of treatment was excellent and should continue. (6.12) | May 2015 | http://www.hmic.gov.uk/media/derbyshire-joint-inspection-of-custody-suites-20130927.pdf |