

**Executive Summary**

**HMIC/HMIP Inspection of Police Custody Suite in Leicestershire Constabulary**

**Introduction**

This inspection of police custody suites in Leicestershire is part of a programme of work by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and HM Inspectorate of Prisons. These inspections form part of a wider programme of joint work by the chief inspectors of criminal justice. They also contribute to the United Kingdom's compliance with its international obligation to ensure regular independent inspection of all places of custody<sup>1</sup>. Each inspection examines force-wide strategies, treatment and conditions, individual rights and healthcare.

At the time of the inspection, Leicestershire Constabulary had five custody suites designated under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) for the reception of detainees. Those at Beaumont Leys, Keyham Lane, Loughborough and Wigston operated 24 hours a day, while that in Coalville only opened at weekends. The largest suite, Euston Street in Leicester, was closed for refurbishment. In addition, inspectors visited two non-designated suites at Melton Mowbray and Oakham. In 2008–09, 27,810 detainees were held in Leicestershire's custody suites, for an average of eight hours and 47 minutes each. Management structures were sound and all staff working in custody were permanent.

However, there were a number of detention officer vacancies and some staff, particularly at Keyham Lane, were stretched. There was a positive working relationship with the Police Authority, and independent custody visitors reported excellent relationships with the force and a willingness to act on their feedback. There was also good partnership working with the Crown Prosecution Service, but staff expressed frustration at the slowness of the UK Border Agency in dealing with immigration detainees. Detainees were generally treated respectfully, although the condition of some accommodation was poor and we welcomed the intention to take the worst out of use once Euston Street reopened. Better privacy arrangements were required for toilets and showers. The provision of food and drinks was satisfactory. Insufficient attention was paid to the particular needs of women, juveniles and detainees with disabilities. While there was an appropriate focus on risk assessment, too many cells had ligature points and not all had camera cover. Use of force was not well recorded and this inhibited monitoring of trends and patterns by managers.

Custody sergeants rigorously applied PACE codes of practice and ensured that detainees received their entitlements. However, children aged 17 were not given access to an appropriate adult. Detainees were not told how to complain and there was no system to manage racist complaints. As reported in a number of other forces, there were serious deficiencies in the storage and management of DNA and forensic samples. Healthcare arrangements were generally good and ensured that the physical health, mental health and substance use needs of detainees were met. Indeed, services for those with drug and alcohol problems were among the best we have seen. There was scope to further develop clinical governance and oversight of service provision. In particular, the response times of health professionals required better monitoring. Clinical rooms needed to be better maintained and cleaned.

This inspection of Leicestershire Constabulary police custody suites has identified much good practice, but also some areas of concern, a number of which are

common across other forces that we have visited. We hope that, by reinforcing good practice and pointing to areas for 1 Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Prevention of Torture and Inhumane or Degrading Treatment. Leicester police custody suites 6 improvement, senior officers and the Police Authority will be assisted to make further progress with the provision of custody in their force area.

**Denis O'Connor and Anne Owers**  
**HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary and HM Chief Inspector of Prisons**  
**October 2009**

## 7. Summary of recommendations

### Strategy

#### To Leicestershire Constabulary

- 7.1 The current staffing model in custody suites should be reviewed to ensure it allows for the care and welfare of detainees to be met. (3.17)
- 7.2 Custody refresher training should be provided to all staff who work within the custody environment as a matter of course, including topics such as safer custody and child protection. (3.18)
- 7.3 Shift patterns should be reviewed to ensure handovers are factored into all shifts. (3.19)

#### Treatment and conditions

- 7.4 Cells adapted for use by detainees with disabilities should be provided. (4.24)
- 7.5 There should be formal policies setting out how staff should deal with juveniles and women held in custody. (4.25)
- 7.6 Closed-circuit television screens should be located in areas that enable easy monitoring. (4.26)
- 7.7 All cells should be fit for purpose and free of ligature points. (4.27)
- 7.8 Health and safety walk-throughs should take place daily. (4.28)
- 7.9 Use of force should be monitored centrally to identify any issues or trends. (4.29)
- 7.10 The reasons for the deployment of incapacitant sprays in custody should be recorded in custody records and centrally. Managers should quality assure such usage and satisfy themselves as to appropriateness, proportionality and any health and safety issues. (4.30)
- 7.11 The physical conditions of suites at Beaumont Leys and Coalville should be clean and in a good state of repair. (4.31)

- 7.12 Booking in desks should not be too high and should afford privacy to detainees. (4.32)
- 7.13 On an individual assessed basis, nicotine replacement should be available to smokers. (4.33)
- 7.14 Mattresses should be cleaned between uses and kept clean. (4.34)
- 7.15 Pillows should be provided routinely to all detainees. (4.35)
- 7.16 Views of toilets in cells covered by closed-circuit television should be obscured. (4.36)
- 7.17 All female detainees should be offered a hygiene pack. (4.37)

#### Leicester police custody suites 32

- 7.18 Detainees held overnight and those who are dirty should be offered a shower and shower areas should afford sufficient privacy, particularly for female detainees. (4.38)
- 7.19 Detainees should be offered access to an outdoor exercise area. (4.39)
- 7.20 Detainees held over 24 hours, and young people, should be allowed visits. (4.40)
- 7.21 Detainees should be offered suitable reading material at all sites. (4.41)

#### Individual rights

- 7.22 Managers should liaise with the UK Border Agency to ensure that immigration detainees are held in police custody for the shortest possible time. (5.15)
- 7.23 More posters should be displayed in languages other than English. (5.16)
- 7.24 Formal pre-release risk management planning should be implemented consistently and any actions taken recorded on NSPIS. (5.17)
- 7.25 Juveniles should be able to receive the services of an appropriate adult when required. (5.18)
- 7.26 Detainees aged 17 years should be provided with an appropriate adult. (5.19)
- 7.27 The issues surrounding the lack of quality control systems and processes for taking, storing and submission of DNA and forensic samples should be addressed as an urgent priority, including a referral to the forensic science regulator. (5.20)
- 7.28 Detainees' property should be stored securely. (5.21)
- 7.29 Information about how to make a complaint should be given to all detainees during the booking in process in a format they understand and clearly displayed in the custody suites. (5.22)

- 7.30 Detainees should be able to make a formal complaint about treatment during arrest or detention while still in custody and all such complaints should be promptly and fully investigated. (5.23)
- 7.31 The number and nature of complaints with a racial element should be monitored by managers and any trends identified acted on. (5.24)

### Healthcare

- 7.32 The police should monitor all healthcare contracts to ensure response times and performance indicators are met. (6.37)
- 7.33 FMEs and other healthcare professionals should receive ongoing training, supervision and support to maintain their professional registration and development. (6.38)
- 7.34 All health services staff should be encouraged to engage in clinical supervision. (6.39)
- 7.35 The clinical (medical examination) rooms should be clinically clean, appropriately equipped and fit for purpose at all times. (6.40)
- 7.36 All medications on site should be stored safely and securely. (6.41)

### Leicester police custody suites 33

- 7.37 Safe and effective medicines management should be supported by appropriate access to reference information by healthcare staff. (6.42)
- 7.38 All equipment, including resuscitation kit, should be ready for use and regularly checked and maintained and all staff (healthcare and custody staff) should understand how to access and use it effectively. (6.43)
- 7.39 Female detainees should be able to see a female doctor on request. (6.44)
- 7.40 Clinical record systems should be consistent in terms of accessibility, scope and quality and kept confidential at all times. (6.45)
- 7.41 Arrangements for detainees with mental health problems should be reviewed and the police should have robust arrangements that are known and agreed by all parties involved, including services for juveniles. (6.46)

### Good practice

- 7.42 The arrangements for detainees with substance use issues to see a worker and the follow up service provided were excellent, custody staff were informed about the workers' role and there was good rapport between the workers and other agencies, including prisons, as well as with detainees. Support with alcohol issues was also included and needle exchange was available on release. (6.47)

Leicester police custody suites 34

Leicester police custody suites 35