

# **PE1900/Z: Access to prescribed medication for detainees in police custody**

## **Minister for Drugs and Alcohol Policy and Sport written submission, 19 August 2025**

I thank you for your letter dated 7 July 2025 regarding the above petition. As the recently appointed Minister for Alcohol, Drugs and Sport, I would like to express my appreciation for the important work of the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee in ensuring that detainees receive prescribed medication and appropriate care while in police custody.

I am also keen to ensure that all health boards have the appropriate care and practices in place for detainees in police custody. To complete our review, NHS Lanarkshire informed us on 10 July, that the Home Office inspected the Motherwell and Coatbridge Custody Suites on 9 July. Following the visit, NHS Lanarkshire met with the Lead Technician. While minor updates to the Standard Operating Procedures are needed, they are exploring sourcing supplies from university hospital pharmacies to speed up licensing and an action plan is being developed to support implementation. The Scottish Government will also commission another survey later this year, similar in scope to the rapid review previously distributed. This will serve as a mechanism for monitoring compliance with all Health Boards.

You requested a detailed update on NHS Grampian's policy and practice regarding the provision of prescribed medication, including the status of its controlled drug licence application. I have contacted NHS Grampian who have confirmed that Opioid Replacement Therapy is now available at the Kittybrewster Suite. They are currently addressing logistical challenges in order to extend this service to the remaining two custody suites. I have attached the letter from NHS Grampian to this response. You also asked for my reflections on suggestions of a lack of accountability for Controlled Drug Accountable Officers when issues are identified in the policy and procedure across health boards. HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) and Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) began work in 2022 on a baseline review of the provision of healthcare services to police custody centres. The learning was used to develop a [framework](#) to inspect healthcare services within police custody, and to devise a methodology for the joint inspection of police custody centres.

The framework is underpinned by a human rights-based approach and aligned with HIS Quality Assurance System Quality Indicators. It outlines that HIS, working jointly with HMICS, will 'support healthcare providers to deliver high quality healthcare, and will scrutinise those services to provide public assurance about the quality and safety of this care.'

This includes patients receiving prescribed medication according to an agreed protocol with the relevant health board, including relief for drug and alcohol withdrawal if clinically indicated.

These scrutiny bodies have commenced a programme of joint police custody inspections since 2023 with the most recent report published in July this year. Reports are available on the HMICS [website](#). Where areas for improvement are identified, recommendations are made within inspection reports and progress is monitored by the scrutiny bodies.

I trust that this update is helpful for the Committee.

**Maree Todd MSP**