

Institution: University of Dundee

Unit of Assessment: 21 Politics and International Studies

Title of case study: Policy change in police custody environments in Scotland

1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

Martin Elvins is involved in research providing an evidence base for policy formation on police custody environments in Scotland. The research has two related foci: healthcare of police detainees, and independent custody visiting (ICV). The former has generated a benchmark study of police healthcare in Tayside, which is the first and so far only in-depth evaluation of practice on this aspect of police work in Scotland. Research on the latter aspect directly informed the evidence base that saw ICV become a statutory requirement for the first time in Scotland under The Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

Martin Elvins (Lecturer in Politics, University of Dundee) has, since 2010, been substantively involved in two innovative, complementary research studies examining different aspects of police custody in Scotland. Each was the first of its kind on the respective topic in Scotland.

The study *Evaluating the impact of initiating health interventions within police holding cell environments* was drawn from findings of research conducted between January 2010 and December 2011 in Dundee, Arbroath and Perth. The project was funded by a grant from the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland (ACPOS) with the task of evaluating a three-year 'pilot' Service Level Agreement between Tayside Police and NHS Tayside for delivery of custody nursing and forensic medical services. The study was designed to test three key questions about the pilot:

1. What has worked for Tayside Police and its staff and why has it worked?
2. What has worked for detainees and why has it worked?
3. What has worked for NHS Tayside and its staff and why has it worked?

Dr Elvins led all police-related aspects of the study alongside colleagues from the University of Dundee School of Nursing and Midwifery who addressed health-related aspects. The output of this research was a report submitted to ACPOS and the Health and Social Care Directorate of the Scottish Government in January 2012. The cross-disciplinary nature of this research was distinctive and innovative because it provided evidence on how joint working between police and NHS staff affected practice in each of these publicly funded institutions, in contrast to standard approaches, which tend to assess policing and health care separately. The research found:

- Under nurse-led healthcare police staff experienced greatly improved confidence in their risk management and mitigation abilities in relation to detainee healthcare compared with previous systems.
- Detainees were receiving better quality healthcare whilst in custody under the partnership than had previously been possible. Participants highlighted the value of added time spent with detainees by nurses, improving the probability of continuity of healthcare in the community.

The second study *An Analysis of Independent Custody Visiting in Scotland* was conducted under

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the auspices of the Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR) with Dr Elvins acting as joint principal investigator with Professor Nick Fyfe, with Janine Hunter acting as the project researcher (both Geography, Dundee). The study was distinctive in being the first independent academic-led audit of all the (then) ICV schemes in Scotland, in place to independently monitor the rights and welfare of those in custody. This research (March-May 2010) was funded by the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) and a findings report was produced in July 2010. The research found:

- Coverage and delivery of ICV across Scotland was sporadic and of variable quality in terms of coverage and effectiveness.
- Funding by local authorities of ICV was limited and variable.
- The lack of a statutory basis for ICV in Scotland made for an inadequate oversight regime compared with England and Wales (where ICV has been statutory since 2002).

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. Hunter, J., Fyfe, N., and Elvins, M. (2010) 'An Analysis of Independent Custody Visiting in Scotland', *Final report submitted to ICVA* (Dundee: Scottish Institute for Policing Research [SIPR]). Available open access: http://www.sipr.ac.uk/research/Custody_visiting.php
2. Elvins, M., Gao, C., Hurley, J., Jones, M., Linsley, P., and Petrie, D. (2012) 'Provision of healthcare and forensic medical services in Tayside police custody settings. An evaluation of a partnership agreement between NHS Tayside and Tayside Police (2009-2011)' *Final report submitted to ACPOS*, January 2012 (Dundee: University of Dundee/SIPR). Available open access: http://www.sipr.ac.uk/downloads/Healthcare_Custody.pdf
3. Hurley, J., Linsley, P., Elvins, M., and Jones, M. (2013) 'Nurses leading care in custody suite environments: a qualitative study from Scotland', *Journal of Forensic Nursing*, 9(1), pp. 45-51, January/March 2013.

Grant details:

- £17,018 from the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA), April-June 2010.
- £107,913 from the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland (ACPOS), December 2009-December 2011.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The work outlined in this submission has made a contribution to better understanding of an aspect of police work that has previously been given little academic attention: police custody in Scotland. Dissemination to date has raised the profile of police custody as an arena in which the opportunity to change lives for the better is possible rather than its more traditional portrayal as a negative setting that exemplifies failure in society. The principal beneficiaries of the impact are detained persons, as the research identifies how police and healthcare practice directly affects them whilst highlighting how better risk and stress management practice for police and healthcare professionals is beneficial for all parties. The research provides, for the first time, a comprehensive insight into the nature of the Scottish custody environment, its risks and opportunities. Above all the impact lies in providing benchmark studies for practice at both national and local level, with dissemination providing a catalyst for reflection on what constitutes good practice in this socially important field.

The research described above on nurse-led healthcare in police custody provided a key, independent knowledge base resource for ACPOS as it oversaw the amalgamation of eight Scottish police forces into a single Scottish police service in April 2013. A senior figure at the new body, Police Scotland, has expressed the view that the findings of the report have already served to convince Cabinet Ministers, Scottish government and police forces of the merits of the pilot approach followed in Tayside [corroborating evidence 5.2].

The research provides the Scottish Government with knowledge to inform the means of delivering its stated strategic objectives. Two of the five defined objectives are highly relevant to the issue of medical services provided to people in police custody and highlight the contribution of this research:

(1) Healthier

Help people to sustain and improve their health, especially in disadvantaged communities, ensuring better, local and faster access to health care.

(2) Safer and Stronger

Help local communities to flourish, becoming stronger, safer place to live, offering improved opportunities and a better quality of life to sustain and improve their health, especially in disadvantaged communities, ensuring better, local and faster access to health care.

A high proportion of those who are taken in to police custody are from social groups with significant health care issues but who also exhibit a low propensity to access NHS resources via general practitioners in the first instance. Academic research on police custody environments is rare at UK level and almost entirely absent in Scotland hence the studies described in this document make a key contribution to knowledge about custody issues.

At a time of severe resource pressures the opportunities for cost savings that may – or may not – arise have been examined by the research and it will help decision-makers to identify and quantify them against other potential benefit criteria, such as enhanced human rights, personal well-being or reduced rates of recidivism.

Impact on the rights of detained persons and the reputational standing of Scottish police personnel and institutions is being affected through informing the decision-making process. Dissemination of findings to an international policing audience began in November 2012 when Dr Elvins presented a paper to the annual Nordic Police Research Seminar event in Tampere, Finland (7-9 November 2012). The Health and Social Care Directorate of the Scottish Government has the research report as a primary resource to inform policy decisions going forward. Dissemination of research findings (2013) via the Journal of Forensic Nursing (the official journal of the International Association of Forensic Nurses) extends impact to influencing and changing perspectives or practices of a broader, international audience (both academic and professional).

In the case of independent custody visiting (ICV) the research has directly contributed to a recent policy change that became law in August 2012 – namely making ICV a statutory requirement [corroborating evidence 5.1]. During the passage of the Draft Bill through the Scottish Parliament the Justice Committee was provided with a written submission from the Director of SIPR Professor Nick Fyfe, in which he outlined how the decision to include ICV in the requirements of the legislation was supported by the research conducted by SIPR (Hunter, Fyfe and Elvins, 2010). The written submission from the Scottish Institute for Policing Research to the Scottish Parliament Justice Committee inquiry on the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Bill evidences this [corroborating evidence 5.3].

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5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. Letter from (now former) National Co-ordinator for Custody Visiting in Scotland.
2. Letter from Assistant Chief Constable, Local Policing (East), Police Scotland.
3. Written submission from Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR) to Scottish Parliament Justice Committee inquiry on the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Bill (February 2012):
http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4_JusticeCommittee/Inquiries/PFR16_SIPR.pdf