



**HMIPS**  
HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland  
INSPECTING AND MONITORING

## Press Release

### **HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland publishes full inspection report on Court Custody Provision at Dundee Sheriff and Justice of the Peace Court**

**Date of publication: 21 April 2026**

HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland (HMIPS) has today published its inspection report on the Court Custody Unit (CCU) at Dundee Sheriff and Justice of the Peace Court, following an announced inspection on 6 November 2025. The inspection forms part of HMIPS's ongoing programme of scrutiny of court custody arrangements across Scotland, contributing to the UK's responsibilities under the UN Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT).

Inspectors found the CCU to be **clean, generally well-maintained, and staffed by knowledgeable and motivated personnel**. The CCU manager was praised for her strong understanding of process and procedure, despite being relatively new to the role.

However, the inspection also identified **six recommendations, three advisories**, and highlighted **one area of good practice**. While day-to-day operations were carried out professionally, inspectors raised concerns around **privacy, risk assessment consistency, ventilation, and contingency planning**.

#### **Privacy and Reception Processes**

The current layout and practices in the reception area created **significant privacy breaches**, with new arrivals being visible and audible to others in custody. The proximity of open-fronted cells often resulted in a **loud, chaotic, and intimidating environment**, particularly for vulnerable individuals. HMIPS has recommended a full review of reception and processing arrangements, especially for custodies arriving from police stations or prisons other than Dundee.

#### **Risk Assessments**

Inspectors found **inconsistent completion of risk assessments**, particularly in relation to welfare questions such as self-harm, suicidal ideation, racism, homophobia and bullying. Questions were asked routinely for people arriving from Dundee Police Station but **not consistently for those arriving from other police stations or prison establishments**. The lack of narrative on Handcuff Risk Assessments (HRA) also prevented proper scrutiny. This is a national issue that HMIPS will be following up on.

#### **Ventilation and Accessibility**

The CCU was unable to safely accommodate disabled people due to internal and

external access limitations, with contingency arrangements relying on alternative rooms in the main court building. Inspectors also identified **inactive air vents across all cells**, with ventilation currently below acceptable standards required under international human rights guidance.

### **Contingency Planning and Documentation**

While risk assessments were being reviewed, the tracking documentation had not been updated since 2021. Contingency plans were also **four months overdue** for their annual review.

### **Area of Good Practice**

Inspectors highlighted **excellent care provided to a custody who reported he had been assaulted prior to his arrest**, where staff ensured appropriate checks, offered medical assistance, documented decisions, and placed the individual on enhanced observation as a precaution.

### **Quote from HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland**

*“Staff at Dundee’s Court Custody Unit demonstrated competence, compassion and a clear understanding of their responsibilities. However, important improvements are required to protect privacy, strengthen risk assessment processes, and ensure the environment meets basic safety and decency standards. Implementing these recommendations will support safer, more dignified and more human-rights-compliant custody conditions.”*

### **Recommendations**

Among the six recommendations, HMIPS has called for:

- Removal of the whiteboard displaying names of custodies in public view.
- Consistent risk-related questioning for *all* custodies, recorded on PERs.
- Urgent improvements to ventilation.
- Enhanced suicide and self-harm risk assessment practice.
- A full annual review of contingency plans.
- A review of custody processing arrangements to improve privacy and reduce intimidation.

### **Next Steps**

HMIPS will monitor progress against all recommendations through its ongoing inspection and liaison processes.

The full report is available at

[www.prisonsinspectoratescotland.gov.uk](http://www.prisonsinspectoratescotland.gov.uk)

### **Notes for editors**

- HMIPS is an independent scrutiny body with a statutory duty to inspect and monitor the treatment and conditions of people in Scotland’s prisons and court custody units.
- For further information please contact Kerry Love at [Kerry.Love@gov.scot](mailto:Kerry.Love@gov.scot) or on 07939 980452.

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