

**Report on the Inspection of Court Custody Provision at
Aberdeen Sheriff and Justice of the Peace Court
and
Aberdeen High Court of Justiciary Annex**

18.09.25



Aberdeen Sheriff and Justice of The Peace Court



Aberdeen High Court of Justiciary Annex

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland (HMCIPS) is required to inspect the conditions in which prisoners are transported or held across Scotland in order to establish the treatment of, and the conditions for, prisoners and to report publicly on the findings. This includes prisoners, prisoner transport and Court Custody Units (CCUs) where prisoners and custodies are held awaiting appearance on court.

This report is part of the programme of inspections of Court Custody Provision carried out by HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland (HMIPS).

These inspections also contribute to the UK's response to its international obligations under the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT). OPCAT requires that all places of detention are visited regularly by independent bodies – known as the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) – which monitor the treatment of and conditions for detention. HMIPS is one of 21 bodies making up the NPM in the UK.

The inspections of CCUs are informed by a set of Standards as set out in our document 'Standards for Inspecting Court Custody Provision in Scotland,' published March 2017 which can be found at:

[HMIPS Standards for Inspecting Court Custody Provision in Scotland](#)

These Standards contribute positively to the effective scrutiny of court custody provision in Scotland and will encourage continuous improvement in the quality of care and custody of people held in court cells.

The Standards provide assurance to Ministers and the public that inspections are conducted in line with a framework that is consistent, and that assessments are made against appropriate criteria. This report is set out to reflect the performance against these Standards.

HMIPS assimilates information resulting in evidence-based findings utilising a number of different techniques. These include:

- obtaining information and documents from the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS) and the court inspected
- shadowing and observing staff as they perform their duties within the CCU
- interviewing custodies and staff on a one-to-one basis
- inspecting a wide range of facilities impacting on both custodies and staff and
- reviewing policies, procedures and performance reports

The information gathered facilitates the compilation of a complete analysis of the CCU against the Standards used. A record of the evidence gathered is produced by those undertaking the inspection against each of the Standards inspected.

HMIPS takes a human rights-based approach to ensure that both the standards and the principles of human rights are integrated into policy as well as the day to day running of organisations under scrutiny.

This report has been created based around a human rights-based approach known as the PANEL principles, set out as follows:

Participation: participation must be active, free, meaningful and give attention to issues of accessibility, including access to information in a form and a language which can be understood.

Accountability: accountability requires effective monitoring of human rights standards as well as effective remedies where human rights breaches occur. Is there evidence of issues raised previously now having been addressed?

Non-discrimination and equality: a human rights-based approach means that all forms of discrimination in the realisation of rights must be prohibited, prevented and eliminated. Are the most vulnerable and at risk identified and supported effectively?

Empowerment: a human rights-based approach means that individuals should know their rights or be made aware of them. Is information readily available and support provided so individuals know their rights and entitlements while in custody?

Legality: a human rights-based approach requires the recognition of rights as legally enforceable entitlements and is linked into national and international human rights law. Are the processes and procedures adopted in the CCU in line with legal obligations and human rights standards?

These are known as the **PANEL** principles.

Overview by His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland

Aberdeen Sheriff and Justice of the Peace Court and Aberdeen High Court of Justiciary Annex were both constructed in the 1800s and located on Castle Street in Aberdeen.

A summary of the inspection of Aberdeen High Court of Justiciary Annex can be found at the end of this report. The remainder of the report relates to Aberdeen Sheriff and Justice of the Peace Court.

The main Sheriff and Justice of the Peace Court building had seven court rooms, seven resident sheriffs and one floating sheriff.

The CCU was situated at the rear of the building with the entrance door opening from a secure courtyard, easily accommodating large custody vehicles. The building also hosts the Sheriff Principal for the Sheriffdom, the court Sheriff Clerk and associated staff, police, witness services, court social work, and the CCU.

The CCU consisted of eight cells and four overflow cells, and all were operational at the time of the inspection. The cells varied in size and were capable of accommodating 32 custodies in total, with a further 16 in the overflow cells. This number of custodies was the recognised maximum capacity for the CCU but was seldom required. The CCU had three interview rooms with only one separating the legal representative from their client by a glass partition.

On the day of the inspection, the CCU held 21 men consisting of 19 adults, one under 21 and one under 18. There were also four adult females. Of these, ten had arrived from Police Scotland and fifteen were from a prison. It was noted that the CCU staff correctly placed the different categories of prisoners/custodies in appropriate cells. Cell sharing risk assessments were observed being carried out by the CCU manager.

Prisoners from HMP & YOI Grampian were still making the journey to court unnecessarily. During this inspection four prisoners were brought from prison to the CCU but were not required to appear in court in person as prior agreements had been reached between the Procurator Fiscal and the defence agents. This was a wholly unnecessary journey.

As the CCU was located in an old building there were no disabled toilets and no access for disabled people internally or from the rear courtyard due to stairs. This made the CCU incapable of safely accommodating disabled people. The effective solution was to hold custodies in witness rooms next to the public areas within the court building until their appearance in court.

The doors, walls and ceilings of the cells in both the Sheriff and High Court buildings had graffiti and general signs of deterioration. This was previously highlighted in the 2018 HMIPS inspection report. This level of neglect falls below the standards expected, SCTS has a duty of care to ensure that individuals in custody are held in clean, safe, and dignified conditions. The presence of abusive language and threatening content is particularly concerning, as it has the potential to heighten anxiety, fear, and distress in occupants, especially those who may already be vulnerable. It would also support CCU staff in monitoring and accurately reporting instances of damage caused by those in custody.

With ten recommendations and one area of good practice, the CCU was a clean facility with knowledgeable and well-motivated staff. The manager was relatively new in post but displayed an excellent understanding of process and procedures and had quickly built effective relationships with the local partner agencies.

Inspection Team

Graeme Neill
Kerry Love

Recommendations

Standard	Quality Indicator	Quality Indicator Number	Recommendation	Relevant Agency
1	1	6	HMP YOI Grampian must ensure risk and segregation markers are recorded on PERs.	SPS
2	1	2	The Sheriff Court ventilation system to circulate air in the CCU should be repaired.	SCTS
2	1	4	Sheriff Court cells should be painted to address graffiti.	SCTS
2	4	6	Sheriff Court CCU staff should offer hand sanitiser to custodies before the provision of food.	GEOAmey
3	1	2	Sheriff Court CCU staff should spend longer determining welfare and question individuals in a comprehensive and psychologically informed manner to understand the risk of suicide or self-harm.	GEOAmey
1	2	1	High Court CCU staff must ensure that custodies who do not speak English are provided with clear and comprehensible instructions and information upon their arrival at the CCU.	GEOAmey
3	1	2	High Court CCU staff should spend longer determining welfare and question individuals in a comprehensive and psychologically informed manner to understand the risk of suicide or self-harm.	GEOAmey
2	1	4	High Court cells should be painted to address graffiti.	SCTS
4	4	2	High Court CCTV cameras numbers five and 14 should be repaired and reinstated.	SCTS

5	1	3	High Court interview rooms for visits should be repaired and reinstated to ensure privacy between agents and custodies.	SCTS

Advisories

Standard	Quality Indicator	Quality Indicator Number	Advisory	Relevant Agency
None				

Good practice

Standard	Quality Indicator	Quality Indicator Number	Good Practice	Relevant Agency
2	4	1	The use of petty cash to provide food for custodies with specific dietary requirements.	GEOAmey

INFORMATION ABOUT THE CCU

Description	Name/Number
Name of CCU Manager on duty	Ryan Carneson
Number of core staff required for CCU	14 + 1
Number of staff working	13 + 1
Number of cells	12
Number of cells that are operational	12
Total custody capacity	48
Number of interview rooms	3
Number of non SPS custodies expected	10
Number of SPS prisoners expected	15
Number of custody courts running	5
Number of virtual appearances expected	0
SCTS representative/contact	Isla Morgan

DISTRIBUTION OF PRISONERS/CUSTODIES

Adult Males	<21 Males	<18 Males
19	1	1

Adult Females	<21 Females	<18 Females
4	0	0

STANDARDS, COMMENTARY AND QUALITY INDICATORS

STANDARD 1: LAWFUL AND TRANSPARENT USE OF CUSTODY

The custody service provider (“the provider”) complies with administrative and procedural requirements of the law and takes appropriate action in response to the findings and recommendations of official bodies that exercise supervisory jurisdiction over it.

The provider ensures that all custodies are lawfully detained. Each custody’s time in the Court Custody Unit (CCU) is accurately calculated; they are properly classified and allocated to cells appropriately. The provider cooperates fully with agencies that have powers to investigate matters in the custody areas.

	QUALITY INDICATOR 1: Personal Escort Records (PERs)	Not observed	Yes	No
1.1.1	Is each custody positively identified at the time of arrival and are they named on the Personal Escort Record (PER) form?		X	
1.1.2	Does identification take place out of hearing of any other custody?		X	
1.1.3	When names and dates of birth are obtained is confirmation made that the custody is due to appear before the court that day?		X	
1.1.4	Is there a process in place to record the requirement and any subsequent provision for translation services?		X	
1.1.5	Do PERs include recording custody movements, any significant activities or events, timings including arrival and departure times, when case was concluded, any provision or offer of meals, drinks or healthcare?		X	
1.1.6	Are PERs accurately completed and fully updated?			X
	In summary, are Personal Escort Record (PER) forms accurately populated, and all relevant sections completed?			X

	QUALITY INDICATOR 2: Custody Procedures	Not observed	Yes	No
1.2.1	Is information given to custodies in a language (and format) that they understand?		X	
1.2.2	Was the custody asked questions regarding the following: ▪ Racism ▪ Homophobia ▪ Transgender discrimination ▪ Religious discrimination ▪ Bullying ▪ Any cell sharing issues ▪ Risk of suicide or self-harm ▪ Solicitor access, their own or one will be provided		X	
1.2.3	Are medical or special needs, including relevant risk factors identified through information provided from appropriate third parties and were they acted upon?			X
1.2.4	Are any interventions or interactions recorded including searches or risk factors in relation to the custody in the CCU or during transit?		X	
1.2.5	Are custodies given information on what to expect whilst in the CCU?		X	
1.2.6	Are CCU staff proactive at taking into account changes of circumstances for new arrivals into custody?		X	
1.2.7	Where relevant, is the GEOAme IT system updated and maintained, including the most recent custody photograph?		X	
1.2.8	If where a custody is admitted directly from court, do CCU staff enquire as to whether there are any urgent personal, domestic or legal concerns that require immediate attention and bring these to the attention of the court or prison where necessary?	X		
1.2.9	If a custody was committed to prison and required an interpreter; was the receiving prison notified to enable arrangements to be made to assist in their admission?	X		
	In summary, are all procedures for identifying those in custody fully complied with, are staff proactive in assessing their understanding,			X

	needs and whether they require further support in order to understand basic essential information?			
	QUALITY INDICATOR 3: Cell Sharing Risk Assessment (CSRA)	Not observed	Yes	No
1.3.1	Are custodies allocated a cell according to their legal status, classification, vulnerability, medical condition, sensory or physical impairment, risks and needs?		X	
1.3.2	Was the approach taken individualised and took into account the preference of the custody where possible?		X	
1.3.3	Are those under 21 years of age kept separate from adults?		X	
1.3.4	Are those under 18 years of age kept separate from all other custodies?		X	
1.3.5	Are females kept separate from males?		X	
1.3.6	Are remand or civil custodies held separately from convicted custodies so far as is reasonably practicable?		X	
1.3.7	Are custodies informed of their allocation courteously and able to communicate freely any needs or concerns they may have?		X	
	In summary, was a CSRA carried out on arrival, taking account of individual characteristic (including gender, vulnerability, security risk, state of mental health or personal medical condition) and then allocated to an appropriate cell?		X	
Standard 1 Summary				
1.1.6	Staff verified the identities of individuals in custody upon arrival. However, they did not provide a clear explanation of what the individuals could expect during their time in the CCU. Although staff asked pertinent questions regarding risk and cell-sharing suitability, these enquiries lacked sufficient depth. More time should have been devoted to ensuring that the questions were fully understood and that responses were appropriately considered and addressed. Staff were effective in assessing the physical health of those in custody but did not make adequate enquiries regarding their mental health, including thoughts of suicide or self-harm. Of the 15 Prisoner Escort Records (PERs) accompanying prisoners from HMP & YOI Grampian, all were missing risk and segregation markers. This resulted in the CCU having to contact staff at the prison to confirm this information to facilitate risk assessment and safe cell allocation. This issue			

	was promptly escalated to HMP& YOI Grampian prison management by HMIPS. On the day of the inspection, four prisoners from HMP & YOI Grampian were brought to the Sheriff Court unnecessarily, as agreements had already been reached between the Procurator Fiscal and defence agents.
	Standard 1 Recommendations/Advisories/Good Practice
1.1.6	HMP YOI Grampian must ensure risk and segregation markers are added to PERs.

STANDARD 2: DECENCY, DIGNITY, RESPECT AND EQUALITY

The custody areas should meet the basic requirements of decency and all custodies within the CCU are treated with dignity and respect, irrespective of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

All custody areas should be of adequate size for the number of persons they are used to detain, well maintained, clean and hygienic and have adequate lighting. Each custody should have access to toilets, be provided with necessary toiletries, and offered a nutritious meal. These needs should be met in ways that promote each custody's sense of personal and cultural identity and self-respect.

The facilities management and the physical security aspects of the Criminal Appeal Courts, High Court of Justiciary, Sheriff and Justice of the Peace Courts throughout Scotland is the responsibility of SCTS. This includes the daily cleaning of court facilities, and the physical maintenance or repair of a court.

	QUALITY INDICATOR 1: Custody Area	Not observed	Yes	No
2.1.1	Are cells of an adequate size for occupancy?		X	
2.1.2	Do cells have appropriate furnishing, adequate lighting, heating and ventilation for fresh air and meet all requirements for Health & Safety?			X
2.1.3	Are accessible and safer cells fit-for-purpose and of sufficient number to be available when required?		X	
2.1.4	Is the maintenance of the CCU achieved through a structured programme where faults or defects are logged and dealt with efficiently?			X
	In summary, are the custody areas appropriately equipped and constructed for their intended use and maintained to an appropriate standard?			X
	QUALITY INDICATOR 2: Hygiene	Not observed	Yes	No
2.2.1	Are all parts of the CCU used by custodies kept clean at all times, well maintained and regularly painted?		X	
2.2.2	Does the service provider ensure appropriate cleaning records are maintained, audited and made available to support any reported complaint(s) or defects, or for review of maintenance, cleaning or hygiene standards?		X	
2.2.3	Are custodies encouraged to keep the CCU clean and tidy?		X	
2.2.4	Is any graffiti or damage caused challenged, recorded and reported immediately to the appropriate authorities, i.e. SCTS or Police Scotland?		X	

2.2.5	If an SPS prisoner's behaviour requires them to be placed on report does the service provider do this?		X	
2.2.6	Are hygiene regulations and infection control standards observed and do SCTS have a process in place to deal with any incidents?		X	
	In summary, are good levels of cleanliness and hygiene observed throughout the custody areas ensuring procedures for the control of infection and biohazard incidents are followed?		X	
	QUALITY INDICATOR 3: Toilets	Not observed	Yes	No
2.3.1	Does the service provider ensure that male and female custodies have access to toileting and washing facilities, offering adequate privacy, enabling them to maintain a reasonable standard of personal cleanliness and hygiene?		X	
2.3.2	Is there disabled access to toilets?			X
2.3.3	Are soap, toilet paper and hand towels available?		X	
2.3.4	Are personal hygiene products readily available, if not are signs providing information on how to access such products displayed?		X	
2.3.5	Are proper disposal arrangements for sanitary items available. Where possible is there a female CCU member of staff available to deal with such requests?		X	
	In summary, do all custodies have access to suitable toileting facilities on request?		X	
	QUALITY INDICATOR 4: Meals	Not observed	Yes	No
2.4.1	Is there a range of good quality nutritional food available that meets the needs of those with special dietary requirements, including those arising from cultural or religious beliefs?		X	
2.4.2	Are hot drinks (tea and coffee) provided on arrival at the CCU and at each mealtime whilst within the court custody suites?		X	
2.4.3	Do custodies have access to water at least every 2.5 hours or on request, and is this recorded on the PER or the IT system?		X	

2.4.4	Are meals provided to any custody in court or in transit during the afternoon who are considered likely to be returned to prison after 17:00?		X	
2.4.5	When the service provider is required to provide a lunch and an evening meal, is one of them hot?		X	
2.4.6	Is the provision for hand washing/sanitation provided immediately prior to mealtimes?			X
2.4.7	Are food hygiene rules respected and observed?		X	
	In summary, are all meals provided to custodies well presented, nutritious, varied, conform to dietary, religious, cultural or medical requirements and are served at the appropriate temperature?			X
Standard 2 Summary				
	The CCU was not equipped with accessible toilets and lacked safe access for individuals with disabilities. Consequently, the CCU was unable to accommodate persons with disabilities in a safe and appropriate manner. As an alternative, witness rooms located adjacent to the public areas of the main court building were utilised to facilitate court appearances. Staff did not offer custodies the opportunity to wash their hands or use hand sanitiser before eating food, this was remedied at the time by the CCU manager. There was no throughflow of fresh air in the cells from the vents, this affected the overall temperature of the unit as a whole and made conditions quite uncomfortable. The cells in the CCU were generally in poor cosmetic condition with graffiti on the ceilings and doors required to be painted. A female custody had specific dietary requirements that could not be met by the food available in the CCU. Staff were seen to discuss this and agreed for petty cash to be used to buy food for her from a nearby shop. This was recognised as good practice.			

	Standard 2 Recommendations/Advisories/Good Practice
2.1.2	Sheriff Court ventilation system to circulate air in the CCU should be repaired.
2.1.4	Sheriff Court cells should be painted to address graffiti.
2.4.1	The use of petty cash to provide food for custodies with specific dietary requirements was recognised as good practice.
2.4.6	Sheriff Court CCU staff should offer hand sanitiser to custodies before the provision of food.

STANDARD 3: PERSONAL SAFETY

All reasonable steps are taken to ensure the safety of custodies while in the CCU.

All appropriate steps are taken to minimise the levels of harm to which custodies are exposed. Appropriate steps are taken to protect custodies from harm from others or themselves. Where violence or accidents do occur, the circumstances are thoroughly investigated and appropriate management action taken.

	QUALITY INDICATOR 1: Safety	Not observed	Yes	No
3.1.1	Are any custodies being treated under the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) Suicide Prevention Strategy (Talk to Me) treated with care, compassion and understanding by staff?		X	
3.1.2	Are staff appropriately trained and proactive in recognising and responding to signs that indicate a custody may be at risk of suicide or self-harm?		X	
3.1.3	Are all staff aware of the SPS Suicide Prevention Strategy?		X	
3.1.4	Do staff deal with each custody on an individual basis?		X	
3.1.5	Are all computer systems, paperwork and PER forms kept up-to-date in respect of custody safety?		X	
3.1.6	Is information shared between the CCU, Police Scotland, Social Work, health provider and the receiving prison to ensure that the best care is provided for those who are in a risk category?		X	
	In summary, has the provider put in place thorough and compassionate practices to identify and care for those identified as being at risk of suicide or self-harm?		X	
	QUALITY INDICATOR 2: Health and Safety	Not observed	Yes	No
3.2.1	Are checks (Alpha checks) carried out before custodies arrive and after the CCU is closed?		X	
3.2.2	Are Health and Safety roles allocated in the CCU and staff aware of what these roles are to ensure statutory compliance?		X	
3.2.3	Is all documentation kept up-to-date and do CCU staff meet regularly to discuss Health and Safety matters?		X	

3.2.4	Are regular Health and Safety inspections carried out with actions clearly identified and allocated?		X	
	In summary, are the requirements of Health and Safety legislation observed throughout the custody areas and security checks carried out regularly and thoroughly?		X	
	QUALITY INDICATOR 3: Risk Assessments	Not observed	Yes	No
3.3.1	Does the CCU have a complete set of risk assessments that are regularly reviewed and updated?		X	
3.3.2	Are the risk assessments accessible to all staff?		X	
3.3.3	Are the cell sharing risk assessment (CSRA) and Handcuff Risk Assessment (HRA) outcomes clearly recorded on the PER?			X
3.3.4	Does the CCU have in place a system that ensures the appropriate separation of custodies at all times, including during transit for example, where two people are involved in the same domestic abuse case they should not travel in the same transport to court, from a police station or prison?		X	
	In summary, do all activities take place according to recorded safe systems of work which are easily accessible and based on appropriately completed risk assessments?		X	
	QUALITY INDICATOR 4: Risk Management	Not observed	Yes	No
3.4.1	Do the CCU staff use their interpersonal skills to build and maintain relationships to ensure that any aggression or violence is minimised and do not encourage any escalation of such behaviour?		X	
3.4.2	Where risks are identified do staff react quickly to resolve any issues?		X	
	In summary, does the attitude, behaviour and approach of staff contribute to the lowering of risk of aggression and violence, and are reasonable steps taken to minimise situations that are known to increase such behaviour. Where such situations are unavoidable are appropriate levels of supervision maintained?		X	

	QUALITY INDICATOR 5: Vulnerability	Not observed	Yes	No
3.5.1	Do CCU staff take an individualised, considered and compassionate approach when dealing with those identified as being vulnerable or having a heightened risk of harm or abuse from others?		X	
3.5.2	Are CCU staff sensitive to any change in a custody's circumstances and act accordingly to meet any identified risks, for example, when their status has changed from remand to convicted?		X	
3.5.3	Where additional needs are identified, is there a process in place for a custody to be provided with assistance, for example foreign language translation or other communication challenges?		X	
	In summary, is particular care taken of any custody whose appearance, behaviour, background or circumstances leave them at heightened risk of harm or abuse from others?		X	
	QUALITY INDICATOR 6: Investigations	Not observed	Yes	No
3.6.1	Is there is an understanding of what constitutes unacceptable behaviour by CCU staff and is it challenged and that those found responsible dealt with?		X	
3.6.2	Are custodies and staff both encouraged and supported to report incidents and do they have confidence to do so?		X	
	In summary, are all allegations or incidents of mistreatment, intimidation, hate, bullying, harassment or violence recorded and investigated by a person of sufficient independence with any findings being acted upon by management?		X	
	QUALITY INDICATOR 7: Contingencies	Not observed	Yes	No
3.7.1	Is there an up to date suite of contingency plans that are readily available to all staff and are tested annually?		X	
3.7.2	Do any plans include how to manage any major or minor incidents of disorder including plans for evacuation, high levels of sickness or absence amongst staff?		X	

3.7.3	Is there a back-up facility in place to ensure any data held on IT systems can be retrieved?		X	
	In summary, is there an appropriate set of readily available contingency plans for managing emergencies and unpredictable events and are staff adequately trained in the roles they adopt in implementing the plans?		X	
Standard 3 Summary				
	During the inspection, no prisoners were subject to the SPS Suicide Prevention Strategy - Talk To Me. Throughout the day, staff were seen to deal with each custody on an individual basis taking an interest in their wellbeing. Most CCU staff were seen to have good interpersonal skills and used them to create and maintain professional relationships with custodies to help contribute to a safe environment. A female custody was observed to be shouting, swearing and refusing to engage. Staff used sound interpersonal skills to calm her and managed to establish a good working relationship. Handcuff Risk Assessments (HRA) were clearly documented on the PERs as being carried out by GEOAme staff, but there was no information held on how that assessment was conducted and the decision reached. On arrival in the CCU, custodies were not asked questions about their state of mind or if they had thoughts of self-harm or suicide. This is essential to allow a full assessment of risk to be carried out.			
Standard 3 Recommendations/Advisories/Good Practice				
3.1.2	Sheriff Court CCU staff should spend longer determining welfare and question individuals in a comprehensive and psychologically informed manner to understand the risk of suicide or self-harm.			

STANDARD 4: EFFECTIVE, COURTEOUS AND HUMANE EXERCISE OF AUTHORITY

The implementation of security and supervisory duties is balanced by courteous and humane treatment of custodies in the CCU.

Procedures relating to perimeter, entry and exit security, and the personal safety, searching, supervision and escorting of custodies are implemented effectively. The level of security and supervision is proportionate to the risks presented at any given time.

	QUALITY INDICATOR 1: Duties	Not observed	Yes	No
4.1.1	Do CCU staff discharge their duties courteously and in a respectful manner while maintaining an acceptable level of authority?		X	
4.1.2	Do CCU staff work as a team evidencing good communication?		X	
	In summary, do court custody staff discharge supervisory and security duties courteously and in doing so respect the individuals given circumstances?		X	
	QUALITY INDICATOR 2: Movements and Transfers	Not observed	Yes	No
4.2.1	Are there clearly defined procedures in place for any movement within the CCU including to the courtroom or release and is such movement implemented effectively and courteously?		X	
4.2.2	Are all movements to and from escort vehicles carried out in a safe and controlled manner, with only one custody entering the CCU at a time?		X	
4.2.3	Are CCU staff seen to be carrying out assessments to manage those at risk or likely to be detrimental to the good running of the unit?		X	
4.2.4	Are mechanical restraints such as handcuffs and escort chains only used where risk assessments deem them appropriate?		X	
4.2.5	Do all custodies depart the CCU to a place of detention within two hours of receipt of the court documentation (excluding Glasgow Sheriff Court where a 90-minute timescale applies for a custody being escorted to HMP Barlinnie)?	X		

4.2.6	Was the CCU clear of all custodies within 30 minutes of the receipt of the final court documentation for that day?	X		
4.2.7	Do the CCU staff ensure the accurate recording of all discharge, bail or other disposals?		X	
4.2.8	Are instructions from the Court included within the custody or court records and the PER, and any additional release conditions confirmed before the custody is released?		X	
4.2.9	Do the CCU staff ensure that all custodies are liberated/released as soon as practicable and no later than one hour from the completed court documentation?		X	
4.2.10	Were all custodies adequately clothed and provided with food and a drink, fit to travel, have their property, cash and valuables returned to them and be supplied with sufficient funds to travel if required?		X	
	In summary, are the systems and procedures for the movement, transfer and release of custodies implemented effectively and courteously?		X	
	QUALITY INDICATOR 3: Visitors	Not observed	Yes	No
4.3.1	Is there a structured and systematic approach to physical security that clearly identifies risk and responds to it effectively, including access for visitors to the CCU?		X	
4.3.2	Is there adequate accommodation to facilitate such visitors?		X	
4.3.3	When dealing with all people who visit the CCU do staff always behave in courteous and professional manner?		X	
4.3.4	Do staff understand their roles in terms of security?		X	
	In summary, are the systems and procedures for access and egress of visitors to the CCU implemented effectively and courteously. Is there adequate accommodation to facilitate such visitors?		X	

	QUALITY INDICATOR 4: Security	Not observed	Yes	No
4.4.1	Is there a structured and systematic approach to physical security that clearly identifies risk and responds to it effectively, including the access of people, mail, goods and vehicles to the CCU?		X	
4.4.2	Where court-based CCTV cameras are fitted, are they used to supervise and monitor the movement of custodies, and are they in good working order?		X	
4.4.3	Is recorded material made available for assessment and investigation and stored as per contract guidelines?		X	
	In summary, are the systems and procedures for monitoring the movement and activities of individuals inside the CCU implemented effectively, and accurately recorded on the appropriate system?		X	
	QUALITY INDICATOR 5: Searching & Property	Not observed	Yes	No
4.5.1	Are all searches carried out in strict conformity with the relevant legislation?		X	
4.5.2	Are all searches carried out with proper regard for the individual's privacy and dignity, for instance, the custody must never be fully naked at any time, and any search must be carried out by staff of the same gender?		X	
4.5.3	Were custodies seen to be thoroughly rubbed down and searched when entering the CCU and any handheld detectors utilised where an Archway Metal Detector is not available?		X	
4.5.4	Is all property checked on entering the CCU?		X	
4.5.5	Do CCU staff ensure that any property, cash and valuables belonging to a custody correctly recorded and accounted for?		X	
4.5.6	Is there a process in place in the event of mishandling of property or loss.		X	
4.5.7	Are facilities lockfast and adequate for storing the amount of property required securely and not accessible other than by CCU staff?		X	
4.5.8	Are all custodies personal property, valuables and cash released appropriately?		X	

	In summary, is the law concerning the searching of a custody and their property in the custody areas implemented thoroughly?		X	
	QUALITY INDICATOR 6: Use of Force	Not observed	Yes	No
4.6.1	Is the use of force or restraint proportionate to the risk posed and no more than was necessary for the situation?	X		
4.6.2	In the event of a planned or unplanned use of force or restraint, was the procedure followed meticulously, and all accompanying paperwork filled out to a high standard including the PER, was this supervised by a senior member of staff?		X	
4.6.3	If a planned removal took place was it video recorded?	X		
4.6.4	If physical force was applied, was the custody medically examined by a healthcare professional as soon as practicable, no later than within one hour?	X		
4.6.5	Are reviews of all cases involving use of force or restraint regularly undertaken to observe and analyse any trends that may be appearing?		X	
4.6.6	Are CCU management and staff able to talk through the process for the use of force or restraint and how it should be documented?		X	
	In summary, were physical force and restraints only used when necessary, and strictly in accordance with the law and the service provider's' control and restraint guidance?		X	
	Standard 4 Summary			
	The inspection team did not witness the final custody leaving the CCU, but observed custodies being released with accurate records of their discharge/disposal papers being recorded and within a reasonable time. There was no planned or unplanned use of force during the inspection, with the last incident being early 2025. CCU staff and managers were able to demonstrate a good knowledge of the use of force process, including the completion of paperwork, recording of planned removals and the review process through GEOAmey head office. The movement of custodies to and from the CCU, to agency visits and to appear in court was managed safely.			
	Standard 4 Recommendations/Advisories/Good Practice			
	None			

STANDARD 5: RESPECT, AUTONOMY AND PROTECTION AGAINST MISTREATMENT

Staff treat all custodies respectfully. A custody's right to statutory protections and the complaints processes are also respected.

Staff engage with custodies respectfully, positively and constructively. Custodies are kept informed about the progress of their court case and are treated humanely and with understanding.

	QUALITY INDICATOR 1: Respect and Rights	Not observed	Yes	No
5.1.1	Do the CCU staff regularly keep the custodies informed of any progress of their court case and the process for liberation or transfer to a prison, including timescales?		X	
5.1.2	When asked at any time were custodies able to confirm that they are aware of the progress of their court case?		X	
5.1.3	Are solicitors meeting rooms adequate and provide confidentiality whilst being easily monitored by staff?		X	
5.1.4	Did all sensitive conversations take place in a location away from the hearing of others. This includes assessing risk at the point of admission to the CCU?		X	
5.1.5	Do staff ensure all custodies rights to confidentiality are in place?		X	
5.1.6	Do staff ensure all custodies rights to statutory protection are in place if required due to offence types or potential enemies?		X	
	In summary, the use of disrespectful language or behaviour is not tolerated from staff or those in custody, are relationships between staff and custodies respectful?		X	
	QUALITY INDICATOR 2: – Complaints	Not observed	Yes	No
5.2.1	Are complaint forms readily available for custodies?		X	
5.2.2	Are notices visible explaining how to complain and to whom and is this information readily available to those where English is not their first language?		X	
5.2.3	Do CCU staff ensure that any person wishing to make a complaint is assisted when necessary?		X	

	In summary, does the complaints process work well?			
	Standard 5 Summary			
	The process for individuals in custody to submit complaints in any language was facilitated through the provision of appropriate forms and staff guidance. Inspectors were unable to assess the outcomes of complaints during the CCU inspection, as they were managed centrally by GEOAmey's head office. As mentioned earlier, PERs from HMP & YOI Grampian had not been updated with risk and segregation markers. It was by good fortune only that a potential conflict was averted. CCU staff knew to keep separate two prisoners because of the nature of the alleged offence of one of them, because of prior knowledge, not because this was flagged in the paperwork.			
	Standard 5 Recommendations/Advisories/Good Practice			
	None			

STANDARD 6: HEALTH, WELLBEING AND MEDICAL TREATMENT

All reasonable steps are taken to ensure the health and wellbeing of custodies while in the CCU, and appropriate and timeous medical treatment is available when required.

Where it is necessary to do so, custodies should receive treatment that takes account of all relevant NHS standards, guidelines and evidence-based treatments.

	QUALITY INDICATOR 1: – Health	Not observed	Yes	No
6.1.1	Do any custodies reporting illness, a medical complaint or injury have their concerns recorded on their PER (This includes where use of C&R techniques, restraint or physical force have been applied)?		X	
6.1.2	Do custodies have access to healthcare or medical treatment where required, within one hour?		X	
6.1.3	If medical care cannot be provided within one hour, do the CCU staff ensure appropriate care is provided until the medical provider attends?		X	
6.1.4	Is there at least one staff member trained in emergency first aid on duty in the CCU at any given time?		X	
6.1.5	Has access to the nearest defibrillator been identified?		X	
6.1.6	Is all prescribed medication accurately documented on PER forms and are staff aware of procedures for dispensing?	X		
6.1.7	Is any prescribed medication in the possession of a custody available as per prescription instructions?	X		
6.1.8	Is the CCU appropriately equipped for the prevention and control of infection?		X	
	In summary, is any treatment provided in custody undertaken by an appropriately qualified professional and meets accepted standards and timescales?		X	
Standard 6 Summary				
	During the inspection, no custodies reported feeling unwell or had a health concern. In addition, no custody was in possession of prescribed medication. CCU staff reported that, when required, general healthcare was typically provided within the designated one-hour period by the contracted healthcare			

	provider, Scot Nurse. In the event of a medical emergency, an ambulance would be requested. Defibrillators were clearly signposted, and first aid kits were appropriately stocked. Full personal protective equipment (PPE) was available and had been replenished recently following an outbreak of scabies
	Standard 6 Recommendations/Advisories/Good Practice
	None

Report on Aberdeen High Court of Justiciary Annex

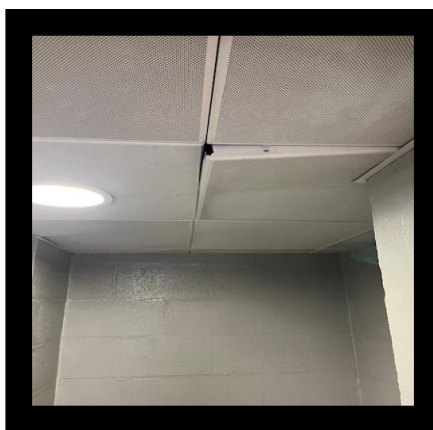
Aberdeen High Court of Justiciary Annex, situated opposite the main Sheriff Court building, was constructed in 1801 and is designated as a Category A listed building. The property was remodelled in 2005 to accommodate court functions, including jury trials and High Court sittings, and contained two courtrooms. Owing to the building's age and original construction, the design of the cell area did not permit natural light to enter the CCU. However, artificial lighting and ventilation was adequate in most areas. The facility did not have disabled toilets and lacked safe access for individuals with disabilities. As a result, the CCU was unable to safely accommodate disabled persons, and the solution was to use witness rooms adjacent to the public areas of the main court building for their court appearances.

The CCU comprised of six operational cells, one of which was designated as an observation cell, equipped with a full glass front and fitted with CCTV. The facility had the capacity to accommodate up to 24 individuals in custody, however, this capacity was rarely reached, so each custody was generally allocated an individual cell. CCTV coverage was provided within each cell as well as the surrounding corridors. It was noted, however, that external cameras five and 14 were defective at the time of the inspection.

The CCU was observed to be clean, well maintained, and the communal areas were presented to a high standard. A structured cleaning schedule, managed through SCTS, ensured daily cleaning, with individual cells thoroughly cleaned following each use. Staff demonstrated confidence in responding to biohazard incidents in the first instance and were fully aware of the established procedures for requesting specialist cleaning services when required.

There was graffiti on the walls, doors and ceilings of the cells that had clearly been there for quite some time. Cells one and two were particularly poor with the door having been scratched with vulgarities and burn marks were visible on the ceilings. It was noted that addressing this type of damage was a recommendation in the last HMIPS report from 2018.

The CCU had two interview rooms for agents visits but neither were not in use due to the steel ceiling panels failing. Visits were being accommodated in the cells at the time of the inspection, and this did not permit guaranteed privacy between solicitors and their clients. (see photograph below)



On the day of inspection, the CCU had three male adults who were on remand and were attending High Court trials from prison. On arrival, staff confirmed their identity against their PER before each being allocated their own cell.

PERs were completed by GEOAme staff to include the prisoner's classification, vulnerabilities, medical issues, dependencies and the outcome of the Handcuff and Cell Sharing Risk Assessments (HCRA/CSRA). Staff should have confidence in asking questions relating to a person's welfare when they first attend the CCU to help determine their state of mind in respect of risk of suicide or self-harm.

PERS accompanying prisoners from HMP YOI Grampian to the High Court that day did not record the risk and segregation markers. This was escalated to prison management without delay by HMIPS.

Inspectors enquired about the arrangements for communicating with prisoners who did not speak or had limited proficiency in English. CCU staff had access to a telephone interpreting service, as well as a set of equality, diversity, and risk assessment questions available in various languages through an online resource. During the inspection, a Vietnamese prisoner was observed arriving at the CCU. Although he was processed in accordance with established procedures, it was evident that he did not fully comprehend all of the information being communicated by CCU staff. Greater time and attention should have been dedicated to ensuring that he fully understood the instructions and information provided.

It was seen that CCU staff adapted their style and approach when necessary. Being friendly and open but, when required to do so, they also demonstrated calm authority and control. Staff were seen to have a good relationship with prisoners throughout the inspection.

The CCU had two toilets for prisoner use, one male and one female. Both were clean and well-equipped, with clear signage for sanitary products available on request.

Meals for the prisoners were supplied by the service provider and consisted of sandwiches, crisps and a drink. The staff also provided those in custody with access to drinking water on a regular basis and every prisoner on arrival at the CCU was offered a cup of tea or coffee.

Hot food in the form of a choice of microwave meals and dried noodles was available for those likely to be held in custody after 16:00. Any special dietary needs were catered for through the purchase of food from nearby shops via the petty cash system.

Inspectors were shown the appropriate processes and records that were deployed to ensure the necessary Health and Safety legislation was adhered to, and that any issues or risks arising were addressed appropriately.

Use of force forms were viewed, and staff were aware of how and when to complete them. For any complaints or allegations raised by individuals in custody, CCU staff followed a clear and structured process for resolution. All complaints were additionally reviewed by the SPS contracts team to ensure fair treatment and to confirm that appropriate remedies were identified and implemented where necessary. The CCU manager informed inspectors that any allegation involving a criminal offence was referred immediately to Police Scotland. The CCU manager also met daily with Police Scotland staff at the court and had established a strong and collaborative working relationship with them.

CCU staff had access to medical services through a recognised provider, Scot Nurse. The contract included a telephone consultation service, however, if necessary, the attendance of a suitably qualified healthcare professional was generally arranged within one hour, although delays could occasionally occur. In instances where prisoners were identified as being on prescribed medication, the CCU staff would administer such medication without prior consultation with Scot Nurse. Non-prescribed medication, however, would only be administered following consultation. All staff on duty had successfully completed a first aid training course and maintained qualifications within their designated competency periods.

RECOMMENDATION - High Court CCU staff should spend longer determining welfare and question individuals in a comprehensive and psychologically informed manner to understand the risk of suicide or self-harm.

RECOMMENDATION – High Court CCU staff must ensure that custodies who do not speak English are provided with clear and comprehensible instructions and information upon their arrival at the CCU.

RECOMMENDATION - High Court cells should be painted to address graffiti.

RECOMMENDATION – High Court CCTV cameras numbers five and 14 should be repaired and reinstated.

RECOMMENDATION - High Court interview rooms for visits should be repaired and reinstated to ensure privacy between agents and custodies.

Glossary

CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
CCU	Court Custody Unit
CCV	Court Custody Van
CSRA	Cell Sharing Risk Assessment
Custody	A person held in the CCU who is not a prisoner
HMIPS	HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland
HRA	Handcuff Risk Assessment
NPM	National Preventive Mechanism
OPCAT	Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
PPE	Personal protective Equipment
PER	Prisoner Escort Record
Prisoner	Person in the care of a prison
SCTS	Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service
SPS	Scottish Prison Service



HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland is a member of the UK's National Preventive Mechanism, a group of organisations that independently monitor all places of detention to meet the requirements of international human rights law.

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