



HMIPS
HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland
INSPECTING AND MONITORING

PRESS RELEASE

HMIPS publishes six Court Custody Inspection Reports

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His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland (HMIPS) has today published six inspection reports examining Court Custody Provision at **Aberdeen Sheriff and Justice of the Peace Court and Aberdeen High Court Annex, Glasgow Sheriff Court and Justice of the Peace Court, Airdrie Sheriff Court, Edinburgh Sheriff Court and Justice of the Peace Court, Paisley Sheriff Court and Justice of the Peace Court, and Dumfries Sheriff Court and Justice of the Peace Court.**

The inspections assessed the treatment and conditions experienced by individuals held in Court Custody Units (CCUs), examining performance against HMIPS Standards covering lawful detention, dignity and respect, personal safety, health and wellbeing, and the effective operation of custody services. Across all six inspections, HMIPS found dedicated and professional GEOAmey staff working constructively with partner agencies and treating individuals in custody with courtesy, dignity and respect.

Inspectors identified several examples of good practice. These included effective safeguarding arrangements for individuals released from custody in Dumfries as a result of strong partnership working between agencies, freshly prepared meals provided in Edinburgh and Glasgow, innovative approaches to meeting specific dietary requirements in Aberdeen, and improved healthcare arrangements within several court custody units.

At **Airdrie Sheriff Court**, inspectors found a well-maintained facility staffed by knowledgeable and highly motivated personnel. Staff demonstrated effective risk management, strong partnership working and good use of interpretation services. Only three recommendations were made, all relating to physical aspects of the facility, including flooring repairs and privacy within toilet areas.

At **Aberdeen Sheriff Court and High Court Annex**, inspectors found committed staff working within facilities that presented challenges associated with the age and condition of the buildings. Concerns were identified regarding the condition of cells, accessibility for disabled individuals, welfare assessments and unnecessary prisoner journeys. Ten recommendations were made across both Sheriff Court and High Court facilities, alongside recognition of good practice in meeting specific dietary needs.

At **Glasgow Sheriff Court**, inspectors welcomed significant improvements since previous inspections, including enhanced cleanliness, better cell conditions, improved arrangements for women in custody and strengthened healthcare processes. However, concerns remained regarding accessibility for disabled people, gaps in risk assessment recording and the continued limited use of virtual appearances for court business. Four recommendations were made.

At **Edinburgh Sheriff Court**, inspectors found staff who treated those in custody competently and with care and highlighted the provision of freshly prepared meals as good practice. However, concerns were identified regarding privacy in toilet facilities, healthcare

accommodation, release arrangements and unnecessary prisoner movements that could potentially be reduced through greater use of virtual court appearances.

At **Paisley Sheriff Court**, inspectors found a well-managed custody unit supported by effective leadership and positive risk management. The report highlighted concerns regarding the condition of parts of the facility, including graffiti, maintenance issues and safety equipment. Inspectors also expressed concern about significant numbers of prisoners being brought to court for short procedural hearings that may have been suitable for remote attendance.

At **Dumfries Sheriff Court**, inspectors found a well-maintained facility staffed by knowledgeable and motivated personnel. Good practice was identified through a multi-agency safeguarding process supporting individuals released from custody. Recommendations focused primarily on aspects of the physical environment, including ventilation, toilet facilities and CCTV coverage.

Across the six inspections, HMIPS identified recurring themes including the need to improve facilities for disabled individuals, maintain custody environments to an appropriate standard, strengthen risk assessment processes and reduce unnecessary prisoner time on the road and sitting in court custody cells through greater use of virtual court appearances.

HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland, **Sara Snell**, said:

“These inspections demonstrate the commitment and expertise of court custody staff across Scotland who continue to deliver safe and respectful care in often challenging environments.

We found many examples of positive practice, including strong partnership working, effective healthcare arrangements, innovative approaches to meeting individual needs and staff who consistently treated people with dignity and respect.

However, our inspections also identified areas where improvement is required. These include addressing longstanding issues with some court custody facilities, improving accessibility for disabled people, strengthening aspects of risk assessment and reducing unnecessary prisoner journeys through greater use of technology.

We will continue to monitor progress against our recommendations and work with all relevant agencies to support continuous improvement in court custody provision across Scotland.”

Together, the six inspection reports contain recommendations and examples of good practice intended to support the ongoing development of safe, humane and effective court custody provision throughout Scotland.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

- HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland, Sara Snell, was appointed in February 2025.
- The inspection reports are available at www.prisoninspectorscotland.gov.uk
- For further information please contact Kerry Love, Head of Business Management at kerry.love@gov.scot or on 07939 980452.