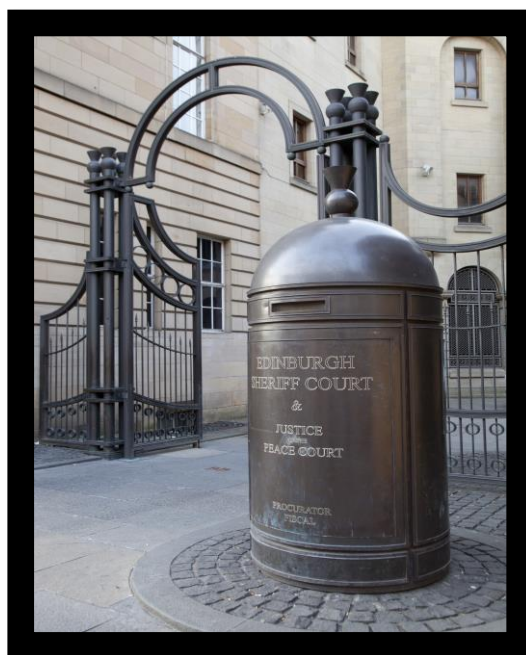


Inspection of Edinburgh Sheriff Court and Justice of the Peace Court Court Custody Provision

11 March 2026



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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 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 (HMCIPS)

Edinburgh Sheriff Court building opened to the public in September 1994. The Justice of the Peace Court was established in the same building on 10 March 2008. It is a large building with eight levels, and the public entrance is accessed from Chambers Street.

The Court Custody Unit (CCU) was located in the basement of the building, with its primary vehicular access at the rear and approached from The Cowgate. An electronic roller door allowed vehicles to enter a large, shared docking area that incorporated a designated service area for the CCU and other building users. The secondary roller door within this space was not utilised for securing the CCU service area, as doing so would have obstructed access for most vehicles.

The CCU contained 27 cells, all of which were operational at the time of the inspection. The majority of the cells were the same size and featured open-fronted grille doors, while five cells were equipped with solid doors. The unit had a maximum capacity of 75 individuals.

On the day of the inspection, the CCU received 26 adult males and two adult females. Nine men attended from Police Scotland, with the remaining prisoners transferred from HMPs Barlinnie, Edinburgh, and Addiewell and two female prisoners from HMP & YOI Polmont. CCU staff appropriately allocated the female and male prisoners and the police custodies to suitable cells in accordance with the Cell Sharing Risk Assessments (CSRA) completed by the CCU Manager.

The meals for those held in the CCU were procured from the public cafe within the court building. Supplying freshly prepared food on request helped minimise waste, offered individuals greater choice, and ensured that dietary and cultural needs could be met. This approach has been highlighted as an example of good practice.

The CCU had nursing provision in place between 11:00 and 13:00 on Mondays and between 12:00 and 13:00 for the remainder of the week. This arrangement was functioning well, allowing individuals to self-refer or to be referred by GEOAmey staff where concerns were identified. Staff explored signs of injury or illness with individuals and showed sound judgement when making a referral. However, nurses were carrying out consultations in one half of a small, partitioned interview room within sight and hearing of security staff. This did not provide confidentiality or privacy, nor was it a conducive environment for clinical work.

The custody toilets located in both the main cell area and the female section did not provide adequate privacy. The toilet doors were positioned too low to allow appropriate supervision while maintaining dignity and privacy. Additionally, the CCU did not have accessible toilet facilities. Consequently, disabled persons in custody were brought into the CCU via the main public entrance and, where they were unable to use the toilets within the unit, were required to access accessible toilet facilities located in the main court building.

Following our recent inspection of Glasgow Sheriff Court, we reported on the continued need for further collaborative work between agencies to increase the use of video-link court appearances. We noted that on one particular day, 28% of prisoners transported

to the CCU were not required to appear in court, either because business progressed in their absence or their attendance was no longer necessary.

Lengthy travel times and extended waiting periods in CCUs for very short court appearances has a disproportionate impact on all individuals, particularly women and young people, as well as providing poor value for money. We also reported that failure to cancel prisoner movement requests placed additional and avoidable pressure on escort services.

Similarly at Edinburgh, on the day of the inspection, no one was scheduled to appear via video link from either police custody or Scottish Prison Service (SPS) establishments. One female prisoner attended from HMP & YOI Polmont, reporting that both she and her solicitor were aware her trial date had been changed, however, she had nonetheless been instructed to attend. By lunchtime, it was confirmed that her appearance was not required, and she was returned to the prison following an unnecessary journey.

These issues of unnecessary journeys apply across the country. The causes can include procedural errors within COPFS, failure of witnesses to attend trial, agents appearing on behalf of their clients, and Sheriffs no longer requiring the prisoner to appear in their court. An underuse of virtual court opportunities is further being exacerbated by reduced hours of availability in SPS prisons.

The inspection identified consistent evidence that case papers marked by COPFS for individuals appearing in court from police custody were routinely delayed, often into the early evening. CCU staff reported regularly having to diffuse situations where individuals had become frustrated due to lengthy waiting times and staff could work shifts of up to 13 hours because of these late appearances in court.

For example, on 3 March 2026, two 17-year-old boys appeared from police custody. One arrived at the CCU at 07:19 and the other at 08:49. Both were held in cells for nearly 12 hours before their eventual appearance in court at 19:16, at which point they were released on bail. While HMIPS acknowledges the complexities associated with prosecution decision making for young people, and notes that these cases are treated as a priority by COPFS, the inspection found evidence that some young people were still held in CCU cells for an excessive length of time pending those decisions.

Individuals held in CCUs for extended periods has a significant impact on their welfare and rights. Releasing anyone back into society during the late evening or night-time hours, when social work and other support services are unavailable, creates risk and places an unreasonable burden on GEOAme staff who have very limited ability to ensure the wellbeing of those being released. Likewise, late arrivals in prison mean people are not seen by health staff on arrival for their clinical needs to be assessed.

Inspection Team

Graeme Neill
Kerry Love

Recommendations

Standard	Quality Indicator	Quality Indicator Number	Recommendation	Relevant Agency
1	2	2	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	3	1	Male and female toilets should provide adequate levels of privacy for the user.	SCTS
4	2	10	Custodies should always be released with means to return home and sufficient information to direct them to support if required.	GEOAmey
6	1	6	Police and CCU staff should ensure that the prescribing, and inclusion of medicines in personal property is recorded clearly, consistently, and transparently on PERs.	GEOAmey Police Scotland
6	1	8	Medical staff should be provided with appropriate facilities to allow them to effectively carry out medical assessments.	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	Freshly prepared food ensured a good standard of quality and	GEOAmey

			enabled dietary requirements and individual preferences to be accommodated.	
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INFORMATION ABOUT THE CCU

Description	Name/Number
Name of CCU Manager on duty	Stephen Kuczara
Number of core staff required for CCU	3 + 19
Number of staff working	3 + 21
Number of cells	27
Number of cells that are operational	27
Total custody capacity	75
Number of interview rooms	6 legal and 2 agency
Number of non SPS custodies expected today	9
Number of SPS prisoners expected	19
Number of custody courts running	2
Number of virtual appearances expected	0
SCTS representative/contact	Michelle Baillie

DISTRIBUTION OF PRISONERS/CUSTODIES

Adult Males	<21 Males	<18 Males
26	0	0

Adult Females	<21 Females	<18 Females
2	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)	Unable to Inspect	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	When names and dates of birth are obtained is confirmation made that the custody is due to appear before the court that day?		X	
1.1.3	Is there a process in place to record the requirement and any subsequent provision for translation services?		X	
1.1.4	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	
1.1.5	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	Unable to Inspect	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		X	

	▪ Transgender discrimination ▪ Religious discrimination ▪ Bullying ▪ Any cell sharing issues ▪ Risk of suicide or self-harm ▪ Solicitor access, their own or one will be provided			
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 GEOAmeY 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, needs and whether they require further support in order to understand basic essential information?		X	
	QUALITY INDICATOR 3: Cell Sharing Risk Assessment (CSRA)	Unable to Inspect	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				
	The CCU did not have a suitable area for conducting confidential conversations upon arrival. Risk assessment questions relating to cell sharing were asked at the reception desk by the staff member carrying out the search, with the responses then relayed to the desk officer. To mitigate the lack of privacy, these questions were asked discreetly, in a low tone, and in a manner that afforded a reasonable degree of privacy from others. In view of the physical constraints of the environment, this approach was considered an acceptable method of obtaining the required information. CCU staff were effective in identifying and referring injuries and illness of those in custody but did not make adequate enquiries regarding mental health, including thoughts of suicide or self-harm. More time should have been devoted to ensuring that the questions were fully understood and that responses were appropriately considered and addressed. Due to what was observable on the day of inspection, it was not possible to inspect this standard in full, specifically 1.2.8 and 1.2.9 However, staff were able to communicate the process they would follow where somebody was admitted from court or required interpretation services.			
Standard 1 Recommendations/Advisories/Good Practice				
1.2.2	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 2: DECENCY, DIGNITY, RESPECT AND EQUALITY

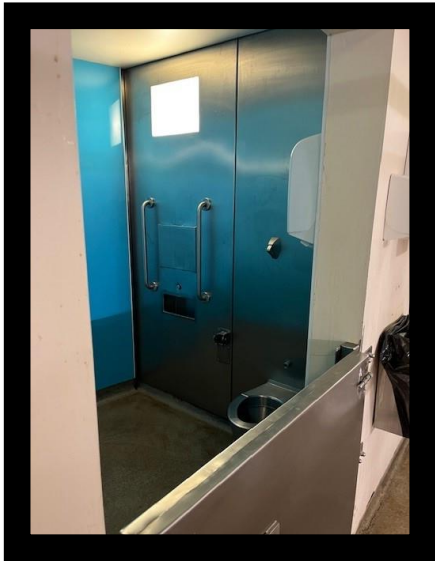
The custody areas should meet the basic requirements of decency and all custodies within the CCU are treated with dignity and respect, irrespective of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

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	Unable to Inspect	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	Unable to Inspect	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	Unable to Inspect	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	Unable to Inspect	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 condition of the cells were good with very little graffiti. GEOAmev informed every individual of the process to report damage to cells which had proved effective. There were no toileting facilities for disabled people. CCU staff reported that they dealt with each disabled custody individually. If required, they would access the CCU via the main public entrance and use public disabled toilets. If their mobility permitted them to use toilets in the CCU this was facilitated. The female toilet and the two main male toilets did not offer sufficient privacy due to the height of the doors (see photographs).  FEMALE TOILET  MALE TOILET				

Standard 2 Recommendations/Advisories/Good Practice	
2.3.1	Recommendation: Male and female toilets should provide adequate levels of privacy for the user.
2.4.1	Good Practice: Sandwiches, crisps and a biscuit were provided for lunch. Sandwiches were freshly made in the court's public restaurant on request from the CCU. This ensured good quality and allowed the provision of specific requests to meet any dietary requirements.

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	Unable to Inspect	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	Unable to Inspect	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	Unable to Inspect	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	Unable to Inspect	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	Unable to Inspect	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	Unable to Inspect	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	Unable to Inspect	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	

	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			
	Staff demonstrated sensitivity and care in their work. On inspection, it was noted that a man who became upset following a meeting with his solicitor, was taken aside and offered advice and support in a compassionate and considered manner. Handcuff Risk Assessments (HRAs) were correctly recorded as being carried out on Personal Escort Records (PERs) by GEOAme staff. However, no supporting narrative was provided to allow scrutiny of the assessments or decisions on whether handcuffs were necessary. This, and findings from other inspections, indicate that the default position for GEOAme staff is to apply handcuffs. HRAs are intended to be “dynamic” and conducted by escorting officers at the time, rather than guided by a set list of questions. However, this approach limits the ability to evaluate the quality of assessments or identify unnecessary use of restraints. HMIPS is addressing this national issue separately with GEOAme. Due to what was observable on the day of inspection, it was not possible to inspect this standard in full, specifically 3.1.1 as there were no prisoners on the SPS Talk to Me Strategy. However, staff were able to communicate the process they would follow to meet these quality indicators.			
	Standard 3 Recommendations/Advisories/Good Practice			
	None			

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	Unable to Inspect	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	Unable to Inspect	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	Unable to Inspect	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	Unable to Inspect	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	Unable to Inspect	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	Unable to Inspect	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				
	Custody court business frequently continued late into the evening and the release process for individuals in custody was inadequate. Although GEOAme staff made every effort to support people upon release, their ability to do so was limited. With social work and other key support services closing at 17:00, it was often difficult to secure the necessary assistance. No information was provided to individuals regarding travel, accommodation, addiction services, or mental health support. Instead, those being released were given a printed map directing them to a local voluntary organisation, "Streetwork," which also closed at 17:00. For an individual exiting Scotland's			

	justice system at Edinburgh Sheriff Court to receive nothing more than directions to a local homeless charity, one that is often closed at the time of release, is wholly unacceptable. Late court appearances, and the resulting delays in transportation to prison, also had a detrimental impact on the welfare of individuals arriving at prison. Arriving late in the evening often meant that key welfare processes, including initial health screenings and risk assessments, were either delayed or unavailable until the following day. This created potential risks to individuals' physical and mental wellbeing. Due to what was observable on the day of inspection, it was not possible to inspect this standard in full, specifically 4.2.5, 4.2.6 and 4.6.1 to 4.6.4. However, staff were able to communicate the process they would follow in the event of an instance of use of force.
	Standard 4 Recommendations/Advisories/Good Practice
4.2.10	Recommendation: Individuals should always be released with means to return home and sufficient information to direct them to support if required.

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	Unable to Inspect	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, including identification, 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	Unable to Inspect	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?		X	
Standard 5 Summary				
	For 5.1.4 please see comments in the standard 1 summary. Staff demonstrated good engagement with individuals in custody, ensuring they were well informed about the progress of their cases at every stage. The solicitors' meeting rooms were fully operational and available in sufficient numbers to accommodate the high volume of daily consultations. Solicitors spoken to were clear in their praise for GEOAmey staff, highlighting the efficient, respectful, and well-coordinated way in which their visits were facilitated. Edinburgh Sheriff Court frequently continued business well into the evening. A significant contributing factor was the late submission of paperwork from COPFS. A review of custody movements showed that case papers for individuals held within the CCU were routinely received late in the afternoon and, on occasion, not until the early evening. One notable example occurred on 2 March 2026, when two seventeen-year-old boys were held in CCU cells for more than twelve hours pending receipt of final papers from COPFS. Their court appearance did not take place until 19:26, at which point they were released on bail. On the day of the inspection, there were no one appeared by video link from either police custody or SPS establishments. During this inspection, two female prisoners arriving from HMP & YOI Polmont informed inspectors that they were aware they were not required to attend, as their trial dates had been changed. Both the prisoners and their solicitors were aware of the updated dates. However, COPFS had instructed their attendance because its internal records had not been updated to reflect the change. By lunchtime, the error had been acknowledged, and the individuals were returned to custody.			
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	Unable to Inspect	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				
	A nurse from Scotnurse attended the CCU on Mondays between 1100 and 1300, and on all other weekdays between 1200 and 1300. Upon arrival, CCU staff provided the nurse with a summary of all individuals in custody who			

	have requested, or are believed to require, medical assessment. This arrangement functioned well. However, the effectiveness of the service was significantly undermined by the lack of appropriate clinical facilities. There was no dedicated space for Scotnurse to conduct assessments. At the time of inspection, the nurse was required to use half of an agents' visit room to examine and treat individuals in custody. This space provided standing room for only two people and offered no privacy as consultations could be seen and heard by non-clinical staff. The conditions were inadequate and fall well below the standard required for safe and confidential healthcare delivery. During a release process, inspectors observed an individual correctly refusing to accept an asthma inhaler that had been presented to him as part of his property. The individual was clear that the inhaler did not belong to him and confirmed that it had not been part of his property on his arrest. There was no record of the inhaler being in the possession of the individual. The accurate documentation of prescribed medication, and its transfer into a detainee's property during transportation to a CCU is critically important. Police and CCU staff must ensure that such information is recorded clearly, consistently, and transparently. Failure to do so undermines the integrity of the custody process and carries potential risks to the health, safety, and legal rights of the individual in custody.
Standard 6 Recommendations/Advisories/Good Practice	
6.1.6	Recommendation: Police and CCU staff should ensure that the prescribing, and inclusion of medicines in personal property is recorded clearly, consistently, and transparently on PERs.
6.1.8	Recommendation: Medical staff should be provided with appropriate facilities to allow them to effectively carry out medical assessments.

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



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First published by HMIPS, September 2026

HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland
Room Y.1.4
Saughton House
Broomhouse Drive
Edinburgh
EH11 3XD