



HMIPS
HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland
INSPECTING AND MONITORING

Press Release

HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland publishes inspection report on Perth Court Custody Unit

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HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland (HMIPS) has today published its inspection report on the Court Custody Unit (CCU) at Perth Sheriff and Justice of the Peace Court, following an unannounced inspection on 1 October 2025. The inspection forms part of HMIPS's ongoing programme of scrutiny of court custody arrangements across Scotland, contributing to the UK's responsibilities under the UN Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT).

The inspection found that **staff working within the CCU were professional, motivated and demonstrated a clear commitment to the care and safety of the people in their custody**. Inspectors observed courteous and respectful interactions, sound understanding of procedures, and an evident focus on safeguarding vulnerable individuals.

However, **the physical condition of the CCU were poor**, with inspectors noting significant deterioration throughout the unit. Graffiti, structural damage, dampness, and inadequate ventilation and heating were evident across the facility. Some damage had clearly been present for several years, and **previous recommendations made in 2020 had not been addressed**. Inspectors concluded that the unit requires **substantial refurbishment** to bring it up to an acceptable standard of decency and hygiene.

As with many other CCUs, there were **no accessible toilets or accessible routes for disabled people** internally or from the rear courtyard due to stairs. This meant the CCU was **incapable of safely accommodating disabled people**. The solution was to hold people in custody with mobility issues in witness rooms, with access to disabled toilets next to the public areas within the court building awaiting their appearance in court.

In total, inspectors made **seven recommendations**, including:

- Repairs and repainting of cells and corridors.
- Improvements to heating and ventilation to ensure safe and humane temperatures.
- Introduction of adequate, lockable storage for custody property.
- Updating and maintaining Health and Safety documentation and inspections.
- Ensuring Personal Escort Records include explanatory text for handcuff risk assessments.
- Ensuring solicitor consultation rooms are repainted and maintained to an appropriate standard.
- Avoiding predetermined cell allocations that do not reflect up-to-date risk information.

Despite the environmental shortcomings of the unit, GEOAme staff were commended for providing appropriate care and meeting medical needs within required timescales. Staff showed strong awareness of vulnerability, risk, and safety procedures, including the Scottish Prison Service "Talk To Me" suicide prevention strategy.

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

“Staff at Perth’s Court Custody Unit demonstrated the importance of this little seen role, showing care for, and a clear understanding of, the needs of the individuals in their custody. The poor and deteriorating condition of the physical environment falls short of the basic standards expected and represents a real challenge across Scotland for many ageing court custody buildings. The unit requires urgent investment to ensure it provides a safe, decent and humane environment for both staff and those held there.”

Notes for editors

- The full report is available at: www.prisoninspectorscotland.gov.uk
- HMIPS is an independent scrutiny body with a statutory duty to inspect and monitor the treatment and conditions of people in Scotland’s prisons and court custody units.
- For further information please contact Kerry Love at Kerry.Love@gov.scot or on 07939 980452.

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