

Wendy Sinclair-Gieben
HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland

Saughton House
Broomhouse Drive
Edinburgh
EH11 3XD

T: 0131 244 8481 | E: Wendy.Sinclair@gov.scot

Via Email

Eric McQueen, Chief Executive,
Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service

Jim Munro, Deputy Investigations and Safeguarding Manager,
GEOAmey

13 July 2021

Dear Colleague,

Inverness Court Custody Unit (CCU) Unannounced Visit by HMIPS – Thursday, 13 May 2021

In these challenging times, as HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland (HMCIPS), I acknowledge that there will be a need for amendments to the daily routines and regimes in Scotland's CCUs in order to keep people safe. I have made it clear, however, that "protective measures must never result in inhuman or degrading treatment of persons deprived of their liberty", and I will continue to report to the Cabinet Secretary for Justice on the treatment and conditions in which custodies are held.

During the completion of COVID-19 Pandemic Emergency CCU Liaison Visits (May-October 2020), contact was maintained with the GEOAmey Team Managers at every CCU on a weekly basis. This confirmed numbers attending, with a focus on understanding the CCU response to COVID-19. A log of these calls was maintained and where the combined intelligence suggested it, HMIPS conducted a one-day Liaison Visit, announced or unannounced, to any of the CCUs. The first round of seventeen Liaison Visits is now complete but we continue to gather intelligence on the number of custodies arriving at CCUs each day.

On 13 May 2021, HMIPS Inspectors carried out an unannounced visit to Inverness CCU as part of the COVID-19 Pandemic Emergency CCU Liaison Visits framework to ensure COVID-19 safety rules were being adhered to.

Inverness CCU had six cells and all were single occupancy. The Scottish Prison Service (SPS) acknowledge six cells in their daily court moves document.

On arrival at the CCU, Inspectors found that there were four custodies present with two more due to arrive. Of the six custodies due into the CCU that day, two were from prisons and four were from police custody.

No custodies were appearing virtually from a prison or police station.

During the [COVID-19 Liaison Visit](#) by Inspectors in August 2020, only one recommendation was made and that was in respect of staff wearing full Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to protect themselves and custodies during searches. Staff should have been wearing a minimum of gloves and a mask when handcuffed to custodies. It was noted during this unannounced visit that the recommendation has now been addressed.

It was found that cells were still cleaned by a dedicated SCTS cleaner between changes of occupants and remained part of an additional daily CCU cleaning rota. Staff were also seen to clean the solicitor interview rooms between use.

Physical distancing markings were also seen to be clearly displayed on the corridor and cell floors of the CCU, and staff were maintaining a safe distance from each other whilst carrying out their duties.

Hand sanitiser was offered to custodies on arrival at the CCU and when taken to and from their cells. Custodies confirmed to Inspectors that they had been offered a mask by CCU staff if required.

The only issue identified by Inspectors during the visit was concerning the management of the standard COVID–19 assessment questions. Inspectors were informed that custodies appearing from the neighbouring Inverness Police Station were asked these questions before walking to the CCU from the station. This was seen to be recorded as “COVID guidelines understood” on the custody’s Personal Escort Record (PER) form. One police custody arriving from Elgin was not asked the COVID–19 assessment questions by the reception staff on arrival, and one custody from prison had no COVID–19 assessment questions documented on his PER.

It was brought to the attention of the CCU manager that the COVID–19 assessment questions must be clearly asked by reception staff and any responses documented at the time of a custody’s arrival in the CCU. It was agreed that this would be implemented without delay.

In summary, Inspectors found that Inverness CCU was clean, fit-for-purpose and very well managed with a good motivated team.

Yours sincerely,

Wendy Sinclair-Gieben

Wendy Sinclair-Gieben
HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland

Copy to: Walter Drummond-Murray, Courts and Tribunals, Justice Directorate
Cat Dalrymple, Community Justice, Justice Directorate
Barry Blair, Police Scotland
David Harvie, Crown Agent

