



**HMIPS**  
HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland  
INSPECTING AND MONITORING

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **INSPECTION OF COURT CUSTODY PROVISION, ABERDEEN SHERIFF COURT ON 8 JUNE 2020**

This report is part of a programme of liaison visits to Court Custody Units (CCUs) carried out by HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland (HMIPS) during the COVID-19 pandemic emergency. The visits are being conducted under HMIPS' new, albeit temporary, [Liaison Visits Framework - Prison and Court Custody Units](#), published in April 2020. These liaison visit reports provide assurance to Ministers and the wider public that scrutiny of the treatment and conditions in which prisoners are held has been continued during the pandemic.

The CCU had a very effective process in place between themselves and Police Scotland, the Procurator Fiscal and the Sheriff Clerk in respect of the release of custodies from the police stations to the CCU. Good communication between the agencies allowed the custody numbers to be staggered, ensuring better management of cell allocation within the CCU and as such maintaining social distancing.

The cells were cleaned by a dedicated Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service (SCTS) cleaner to the CCU between changes of occupants. The CCU was part of a daily cleaning rota by a dedicated SCTS cleaner.

The set questions asked of custodies in respect of COVID-19 and the offer of hand sanitiser should be recorded on the GEOAmeY IT system. This was brought to the attention of staff who immediately changed their process.

Recent meetings between partner agencies agreed that all police custodies held at the Kittybrewster Police Station, who were displaying COVID-19 symptoms, would appear via video link to Aberdeen Sheriff Court and not attend the CCU. It was the intention to roll this out to all custodies held at Kittybrewster Police Station. HMIPS welcomes this initiative, which could result in a significant reduction in the number of custodies attending the CCU and could theoretically mean no requirement for any custodies to attend the CCU from Police Scotland.

A unisex toilet in the annex cell area was seen not to hold a sanitary bin or display sanitary information posters. This was brought to the attention of the Team Manager who stated that he would address this issue without delay.

On arrival at the CCU, the custodies were seen by Inspectors to be handcuffed to staff whilst walking from the Court Custody Vehicles. Staff were generally only wearing gloves, with masks being a personal preference not enforced by the Team Manager. All GEOAmeY staff escorting custodies into the CCU must wear gloves and masks at all times whilst handcuffed.

Cash was provided by Social Work via the Scottish Welfare Fund to provide custodies with travel costs to get home upon release from the CCU, if required. This was an excellent process and of particular benefit during the COVID-19 restrictions to custodies attending Aberdeen CCU from the Banff and Peterhead areas.

**Embargoed until 00:01 on Wednesday 27 August 2020**

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

1. HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland, Wendy Sinclair-Gieben, was appointed in July 2018.
2. On publication the report can be found at [www.prisonssinspectoratescotland.gov.uk](http://www.prisonssinspectoratescotland.gov.uk)
3. For further information please contact Kerry Love, Business Manager, at [Kerry.Love@gov.scot](mailto:Kerry.Love@gov.scot) or on 07939 980452.