



HMIPS

HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland
INSPECTING AND MONITORING

NEWS RELEASE

INSPECTION OF COURT CUSTODY PROVISION, DUMFRIES SHERIFF COURT ON 23 JANUARY 2020

Dumfries Sheriff Court is situated in the town centre of the market town of Dumfries, within the Dumfries and Galloway council area. Originally on the site of a town hall, it was built as an independent place of worship and sold on to the county authorities. The building was enlarged, adapted and opened as a Court House in April 1866.

The inspection took place on a Thursday and there were three males in custody.

Dumfries CCU had five cells in total, including one classified as an observation cell. The GEOAme staff on duty at the time of the inspection consisted of one supervisor and three male staff members. There were no female staff members present and none permanently stationed at Dumfries Sheriff Court. However, it is understood that female staff could be provided at very short notice by redeployments from other areas.

Staff were found to be professional and friendly, and sought to develop good relationships with those brought into their custody. This created a good atmosphere that undoubtedly contributed to the safety within the Unit and was considered by the Inspectorate as a strength.

There appeared to be a good working relationship between the CCU staff and Police Scotland. HMIPS would like to see further training for GEOAme staff on the SPS Talk to Me Strategy and food hygiene.

In common with many other CCUs, the facility suffered from the intense need for refurbishment, from graffiti to essential repairs. The poor maintenance inhibited good practice and compromised security, safety and decency. The repairs should be addressed with some urgency.

In addition, HMIPS was concerned at the lack of physical security for both access and egress to the CCU. This should be addressed.

HMIPS recognises that some of the issues identified in this report have been overtaken or exacerbated by actions taken in response to COVID-19. HMIPS nevertheless hope that the relevant organisations will reflect on where action might be possible now, and that all recommendations can be addressed when the court system is able to return to a more normal operating regime.

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
3. For further information please contact Kerry Love, Business Manager, at Kerry.Love@gov.scot or on 07939 980452.