



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

**NEWS RELEASE**  
**INSPECTION OF COURT CUSTODY PROVISION, EDINBURGH SHERIFF**  
**COURT ON 15 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. These 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.

Four elements of good practice were noted during the visit. Inspectors particularly welcomed the CCU being cleaned twice a day as part of a daily cleaning rota by a dedicated Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service (SCTS) cleaner, and cells being cleaned between occupants without delay when requested.

However a number of issues need addressed. The process for asking custodies the important Cell Sharing Risk Assessments (CSRA) questions was inconsistent and not carried out in a methodical or well documented manner. The escorting officer asked the questions on the stairwell on the way to the reception desk, and only reported to the Bar Officer any answers that gave cause for concern. The staff member then separately asked the COVID-19 related questions and document them on the Personal Escort Record. All questions were asked in locations that were not recorded on CCTV and therefore corroboration was lost in any future disputes or allegations. CSRA and COVID-19 questions should be asked in clear view of the reception desk and recorded on CCTV.

Although processes were in place between the CCU, Police Scotland, the Procurator Fiscal and the Sheriff Clerk in respect of the release of custodies from police stations to the CCU, consultation could be improved. The decisions made on which custodies were selected to be brought to the CCU appeared to be arbitrary, were not based on risk or the expected timescales for time spent in the CCU by a custody.

Inspectors were informed that when custodies first arrived in the CCU, whenever possible, a member of staff would wear full PPE kit to search them, but this was not always the case. When searching custodies, staff should wear full PPE to protect themselves and custodies.

There were no markings on the floor of the CCU that clearly displayed a two meter distance. The markings stopped at the entrance to the CCU. Physical distancing markings should be clearly displayed on the floor of the CCU.

As a priority, the new toilet facilities should be completed for use by custodies.

Although all staff were wearing gloves when handcuffed to custodies, only some staff were wearing masks. All staff should wear a minimum of gloves and a mask when handcuffed to custodies.

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.