



HMIPS
HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland
INSPECTING AND MONITORING

NEWS RELEASE
INSPECTION OF COURT CUSTODY PROVISION, HAMILTON SHERIFF COURT
ON 26 MAY 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. They were 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.

Custodies were offered hand sanitiser on arrival at the CCU and were asked two questions in respect of COVID-19. These questions covered general health and safety and ensured awareness of the government's physical distancing rules. Where the custody was not aware they were advised accordingly.

Single occupancy cells were being maintained whenever possible and cells cleaned between occupants.

At the time of the visit, Hamilton CCU were accepting additional custodies from Lanark, Ayr, and Airdrie Sheriff Courts, due to their temporary closure, resulting in a high number of custodies to process. This created significant challenges for all agencies involved due to the limited cell capacity in Hamilton CCU. The CCU had a process in place between themselves and Police Scotland, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service and the Sheriff Clerk to safely manage the release of custodies from the police stations to the CCU.

This good communication between the agencies allowed the custody numbers to be phased, ensuring better management of cell allocation within the CCU and consequently an ability to maintain physical distancing.

One of the main reasons for this process operating so effectively was that the CCU Manager took control and maintained good lines of communication between the GEOAmev Control Room and local police managers. Inspectors are aware that representatives from all of the key agencies had met and considered how to improve the process. HMIPS recommends that all key agencies should continue to work together to improve the scheduling.

It was observed that there were no markings on the floor of the cells or the corridors of the CCU to show the two meter social distancing rule. The cells were of sufficient size that if they were clearly marked on the floor and benches to emphasise the two meter social distancing rule, they could hold two custodies, but only if absolutely necessary.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the SCTS contract cleaners were attending on request to clean cells between occupants and undertaking additional daily cleaning of the toilets. CCU staff were cleaning the interview rooms with antiseptic wipes between uses.

Embargoed until 00:01 on Tuesday 4 August 2020

As part of the daily staff briefing, the CCU Manager reminded staff to wear masks and gloves as a minimum when working in the CCU. CCU Managers were seen to remind staff throughout the day.

Custodies were generally not attending court, as their solicitors were appearing on their behalf. Risk assessments determined if a custody was cuffed or not cuffed and appropriate measures were in place to facilitate this.

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.