



**HMIPS**

HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland  
INSPECTING AND MONITORING

**NEWS RELEASE**  
**INSPECTION OF COURT CUSTODY PROVISION, PAISLEY SHERIFF COURT**  
**ON 11 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. 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.

Paisley Sheriff Court was the first CCU to be visited following the start of the COVID-19 pandemic emergency. HMIPS have been very impressed with GEOAmey's prompt responses to our recommendations for improvement. Inspectors found that as they continued through their visits programme, many of the early recommendations, such as those highlighted in this report, had been implemented throughout Scotland's CCUs.

At the time of the inspection, Paisley CCU were accepting custodies from Greenock and Dumbarton Sheriff Courts following their temporary closure. The CCU had an effective process in place with Police Scotland to manage the release of custodies from police stations to the CCU. Good communication between the two organisations allowed the custody numbers to be staggered, ensuring better management of the cell allocation within the CCU and maintaining physical distancing.

Inspectors found an under 21 year old male custody sharing a cell with an adult male. Under 21 year old custodies must not share a cell with adults. When asked, the CCU staff were firmly of the opinion that this was permitted within the CCU as the custody originated from a police station. This is incorrect and inspectors made it clear to GEOAmey that all CCUs should be advised as a matter of urgency. HMIPS are pleased to report that this recommendation has already been met by GEOAmey.

GEOAmey advice posters relating to COVID-19 were clearly displayed in the corridors of the CCU and included physical distancing instructions.

All staff were observed to be wearing gloves and some wore masks. It was clear that this was a personal preference and was not enforced by line managers. Staff were generally observed not to be physically distancing from each other. Staff should be constantly encouraged to keep to physical distancing rules by keeping two metres apart whenever possible or wearing full PPE.

It was noted that there were no markings on the floor, or benches within the cells used for sharing, that clearly displayed a two meter distance. There were also no two meter markings in the corridors of the CCU to encourage physical distancing. This should be addressed as a priority.

Inspectors were made aware that due to COVID-19 extra cleaning was being carried out in the main court building during the day, including public areas. This extra cleaning routine should include the CCU.

Keys and hand held metal detectors were not regularly cleaned after use. HMIPS are pleased to report that this recommendation has already been met by GEOAmev.

On arrival at the CCU, custodies were seen to be handcuffed to CCU members of staff who were generally only wearing gloves. This was clearly in contravention of the physical distancing rules of being at least two metres apart. Escorting staff should be advised to wear masks at all times when handcuffed to a custody.

Finally during the previous inspection of this CCU in March 2019, it was reported that the ceilings of the cells were very badly damaged through graffiti, caused by burning the paint with lighters or matches. It was disappointing to see that there was no real improvement over a year later. This should be addressed as a matter of urgency.

#### **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.