

Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service



Alison McInnes,
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

5 April 2016

Chief Executive's Office
Parliament House
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Dear Ms McInnes

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION S4W-30145

The Minister for Community Safety & Legal Affairs in his response to the above PQ indicated that the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS) would write to you with further details regarding the custody facilities at Glasgow Sheriff Court.

SCTS is responsible for the provision and maintenance of the physical custody facilities in all of Scotland's courts and I thought it may be helpful to begin by commenting on the nature of custody provision.

The purpose, and therefore standards, of court custody units are different from those of a prison or police establishment. People in custody are brought to court in the morning and held in court custody cells for relatively short periods immediately before their court appearance and prior to being either released from custody or transferred to prison that same day.

The reality is that court custody units are very challenging environments, with significant volumes of people passing through on a daily basis for short periods of time. There is a constant risk and a history of vandalism, self-harming, food wastage, and body fluid spillages, and these are managed very effectively on a daily basis. We carry out regular "deep cleans" and re-painting of cells, although the benefits can be short lived as the cells are invariably returned to their original graffiti state in a short number of weeks. Graffiti will in many cases be a reaction to confinement and, while search procedures are undertaken at police and prison establishments prior to transfer to courts, people in custody are highly inventive in locating materials to deface custody cells.

Turning to Glasgow Sheriff Court, as part of our planned maintenance programme the entire custody unit has now been re-painted and this will continue to be supplemented by regular "deep cleans".

We will be meeting shortly with the Scottish Prison Service to take advantage of their expertise in maintaining custody facilities in helping to assess our plans to make further improvements for those held in custody, including:

- redesign of the privacy screening for both female and male toilet areas; providing a level of privacy for persons in custody by preventing them from being visible to other prisoners, whilst guarding against the risk of self-harm, risk to other prisoners and damage to property;
- identifying practical improvements around cleanliness and cell management practices; and
- assessing the levels of the lighting in the cell areas to ensure they approximate typical daylight levels.

I hope that this information is helpful.

A copy of this letter will be placed in the Scottish Parliament Information Centre and published on the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service website.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'E' followed by a long horizontal line.

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