

ACTION PLAN – Report on an inspection visit to court custody facilities

CLUSTER: London Magistrates

TIMETABLE	DATE
Date of inspection	17 th November 2025 to 6 th December 2025
Report published	16 th February 2026
Action plan submitted	6th July 2026

[illegible]

2	Not enough attention was given to meeting detainees' individual needs. Female detainees were not always supervised by female staff. Facilities to support detainees with disabilities were limited, awareness of and provision for neurodiverse needs was low, and staff used telephone interpreting too infrequently to safeguard detainees' welfare.	Accept	HMCTS – has 3 courthouses that are Equality Act (EA) compliant, which we must continue to ensure are in working order. Prisoners can and are re-located across London or the Cloud Video Platform (CVP) can be used if EA lifts are not in a functioning order. The use of Remote hearings does meet detainees needs when they are in a position whereby they either cannot travel or need specific assistance for their case to be heard. This includes using remote Interpreters remotely (CVP).	HMCTS	End July 2026

			Facilities Management (FM): FM attend the quarterly HMCTS / PECS / Serco custody forum as a standing member, with weekly escalation meetings also held with EQUANS to review reactive maintenance and custody-related operational risks. Following the inspection, custody-focused oversight has been strengthened through enhanced monitoring of defects, cleaning standards and operational risks. Regional FM teams and Building Champions undertake routine custody inspections, with actions tracked through the Building Champions reporting process and FM helpdesk systems. Repeat issues and outstanding actions are reviewed through governance meetings to support escalation and resolution. The Regional Facilities Manager (London Region) is responsible for FM oversight of custody-related estate actions, supported by local FM teams, Building Champions and the FM service provider. Promotion of the use of Big Word is regularly communicated to staff. Serco conducted a survey with custody suites to ascertain why usage was low in some areas and the main points raised were	HMCTS FM PECS/ Serco	August 2026
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			around length of time it took to obtain a translator. Further development includes, good practice guide has been developed to follow the model used where usage is high, i.e. Highbury Corner and this will be released to complement existing Toolbox Talk and video on translation service. Serco is also exploring the use of AI driven software which is in use in immigration contracts providing an almost instantaneous response Awareness of neurodiversity will be explored and current workstreams are in place from the Safer Custody Board. This can be further updated at the next 3 monthly checkpoint. Re-brief to all staff via Weekly Briefing Sheet to remind of the importance of female-to-female ratio supervision.		End July 2026
3	The main agencies responsible for court custody did not do enough to address the reasons why some detainees were held for longer than necessary.	Accept	HMCTS – to recognise the continuous importance of completing CER's within 72 hours. HMCTS are looking at ways in improving the communication from the courtroom when it is recognised that there is a delay, to the admin back-office staff to complete the CER's document.	HMCTS	End July 2026

			Ensure that cases are resulted promptly and that outcomes are shared with Serco in a timely manner. Serco continues to monitor the use of and reporting on the CERs process. Escalation of prioritisation remains a process scrutinised by internal audit. A digital log is maintained to highlight release delays and the data from this is fed back at quarterly Welfare Boards. Serco/PECS Improvement plans are currently in place to specifically focusing on outcomes for all detainees. Serco/PECS will continue to engage to support efficiencies on upload to the Common Platform and would welcome that being a standing agenda item on stakeholder meetings.	PECS / Serco	May 2026 Completed – BAU, Serco will continue to submit Self CERs, and escalate any hot spots to PECS Female & Male turnaround times, are reviewed monthly as part of the Improvement plan actions, and actions discussed with PECS
4	Cells were often not clean, and many had ingrained dirt on floors, stains on walls, potential ligature points and graffiti, including some that was offensive. Toilet facilities were unpleasant and lacked seats and hot water and dispensers for toilet paper and soap.	Accept	HMCTS – Reminder to Serco to ensure the Cleaning Contract book is completed in relation to on-going issues. Since the Inspection we have we have introduced an inspection during the month of March / April for the Building Champion and CCM / DCCM to complete a full inspection of the cells in relation to Ligature Points and Toilet and Towel dispensers.	HMCTS	

			Following this initial inspection, we will continue to carry these out monthly and any findings to be reported on the Building Champions Reporting Tool. Facilities Management (FM): Custody cells are maintained under the EQUANS Total Facilities Management contract, with bodily fluid incidents managed through Serco's REACT arrangements. Following the inspection, FM strengthened custody-specific oversight through enhanced defect monitoring, joint inspections with Building Champions, targeted deep cleaning activity and increased escalation of repeat issues. A London-wide custody improvement programme commenced in April 2026, focusing on deep cleaning, cell condition reviews and remedial works at priority sites. Monthly joint inspections by FM and Building Champions commenced in March / April 2026 and continue to monitor cleanliness, ligature risks and cell conditions, with actions tracked through the Building Champions reporting process and FM helpdesk systems. Later-running custody sittings can restrict cleaning access windows and FM continue to work with operational teams, PECS providers and Building	HMCTS FM	
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			Champions to improve access arrangements and maintain cleaning standards. The Regional Facilities Manager (London Region) is responsible for FM oversight of custody-related estate actions. Later-running custody sittings have at times restricted cleaning access windows. FM and Building Champions are working with local custody teams to improve access arrangements and reduce impact on cleaning standards. Works are prioritised against statutory and operational thresholds to ensure value for money while maintaining safe and operational custody areas and courtrooms. A robust and long-standing defect process is in place. Custody suite staff raise defects on both a dedicated form to be raised with HMCTS and on an internal register for monitoring. A weekly email is issued to remind locations to review and update their register to record progress on defects raised. Serco will continue to support HMCTS via the embedded defect reporting process.	PECS / Serco	
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5	Care for children was not good enough and they were frequently locked in cells without a risk-based justification.	Accept	Communication will be issued to all Children & Young People staff, Court Custody Managers, Deputy Court Custody Managers and Officers in Charge on the need to ensure entries are made on the Digital Person Escort Record to state whether enhanced care was provided, and if not why. The entry needs to be made in the ad hoc section of the Digital Person Escort Record under Welfare check, beginning with the word ENHANCED meaning we will be able to search and challenge when entries have not been made. We will work on a further solution to enable this entry to be made in Serco Electronic Record System. Entries must be made stating that ENHANCED Care has been provided and will include location (legal room, dedicated Children & Young People room, cell, cell with door open, if not open why), meal choice and activities provided. Children & Young People Operations managers will conduct daily checks on compliance of entries being made and challenge where they are not.	Serco	Ongoing – to be monitored to ensure use and sustained improvement. Further update end July 2026.
6	Not enough was done to make sure acutely mentally unwell detainees in court custody received prompt Mental Health Act	Accept	The involvement of L & D from an HMCTS perspective comes from the courtroom and a Judicial direction to obtain an assessment. This is not something HMCTS can directly influence.	HMCTS	Ongoing - Continue to work with partners to raise awareness and seek improvements.

	assessments and diversion to specialist care and treatment.		However, HMCTS will continue to raise these concerns through appropriate channels and collaborate with NHS partners. Serco will continue to liaise with Liaison and Diversion services. Although Serco cannot influence the availability of Mental Health Assessments for detainees whilst in our care, Pre-release risk assessments should flag where mental health support may be required and the use of these has been re-briefed to all staff. Appropriate information to signpost is available in release support leaflets. Serco will re-brief that an ad hoc entry should be made on the Digital Person Escort Record to annotate whether support leaflets have been issued.	Serco/ Liaison & Diversion	Continued conversations through existing NHSE channels
7	Release arrangements remained weak. Some detainees were locked inappropriately into cells, release interviews did not always identify immediate concerns, and not all were	Accept	Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) 061 Release of a Prisoner, Child or Young Person from Court is very clear on the process for detainees and will be re-briefed.	Serco	August 2026

	provided with sufficient means to travel home. Releases for those who originated from prison were often significantly delayed.		1 st line assurance checks will monitor adherence to policy and accuracy of documentation. The use of pre-release risk assessments has been re-briefed to the operation. Subsistence arrangements are regularly briefed to the operation and form part of the 2 nd line assurance activities. It is proposed to introduce a travel warrant book divider to include the correct subsistence amounts at a glance. A delays Management Information report has been introduced to focus on data at stakeholder quarterly meetings and a process for recording of delays is in place.		
	Key Concerns				
8	Some detainees waited too long to alight from what were often cold vehicles.	Accept	The reception checklist and Welfare sheet has recently been reviewed for re-issue. Staff to be re-briefed on the process to ensure that the process is conducted as swiftly as possible whilst ensuring all relevant information and risks are captured. Ensuring swift disembarkation of custodies and not a focus on property has been added to the Area Operations Managers 1 st line assurance checklist.	Serco	Completed
9	Whiteboards with information identifying individuals in custody were	Reject	Initials only should be in use on whiteboards.	Serco	Rejected

	displayed for detainees to see, which compromised confidentiality		As per Information Commissioners Office guidance surnames, if they were to be used, would not in themselves constitute a breach of confidentiality.		
10	Staff were not always briefed comprehensively about detainee risks, and some observation levels were not completed at the required frequency.	Accept	The use of the Daily Briefing Sheet will be re-briefed and monitored via 1st line and 2nd line Assurance. This includes the emphasis on briefing staff on all prisoners of note, their risk mitigation arrangements and any special/medical needs. Serco operate a dynamic risk Profile Chart which is initiated from information contained on dPERs and then can be updated throughout the day. Risks are annotated and mitigation controls are clearly identified, including the use of restraints and number of officers required to escort. The rationale for mitigation is also annotated. The Prisoner Welfare Check toolbox talk and SOP 054 Prisoner Welfare at Court will be re-briefed to all staff to ensure that all are knowledgeable around the frequency of observation levels.	Serco	Re-brief to be completed by end May 2026 Full action and measured continuous improvement by August 2026
11	There was too much routine handcuffing and searching of detainees	Accept	Handcuffing and searching policies are laid out to all staff in SOP 035 Use of Restraints and SOP 033 Searching. The	Serco	August 2026

	without an individual and dynamic risk assessment.		use of handcuffs forms part of the initial risk assessment on arrival and take into consideration for everyone, factoring in the building and surroundings. The Risk Profile Chart annotates any mitigation required from risk led assessments including the use of restraints or searching. The Serco PECS Weekly Briefing Sheet will be used to re-brief the requirements for handcuffing, searching and individual risk assessments. Risk led cuffing and searching evidenced in the Risk Profile Chart has been added to the Area Operations Managers 1st line Assurance checks. The Safe, Secure, Decent and Compliant (SSD) audit covers the use of handcuffs and searching.		
12	The health provider could not access the national patient record system, which meant that practitioners were not always aware of contemporary health contacts and treatment	Accept	The IPRS Aeromed contractor is progressing their access with NHS England. The progress on this is monitored via monthly contract calls with Aeromed. The resolution of this lies with NHS England and Serco will continue to monitor progress.	Serco/IPRS Aeromed	IPRS Aeromed are currently 2 weeks into an exciting 12-week project to implement a new electronic patient record system across the whole of IPRS Aeromed with a projected 'go live' at end of June 2026. Alongside this they are currently working with JWPM to gain access to

	that would have helped mitigate risk.				the care identify service (CIS2), this week we are testing the implementation of Windows Hello which will provide biometric sign in of our devices to enable this.
13	Detainees did not have access to nicotine replacement therapy.	Accepted	NHS Liaison and Diversion HMCTS recognises HMIP's finding that the absence of NRT in court custody presents a welfare gap for detainees experiencing nicotine withdrawal. While the current Liaison and Diversion (L&D) specification does not provide for routine supply of NRT in court custody, HMCTS will continue work with the Prisoner Escort and Custody Service (PECS) provider and NHS partners to explore proportionate and deliverable options. Within our prisons we do offer smoking cessation and access to NRT and HMPPS issue vapes	NHS L & D	Ongoing - Continue to work with partners to raise awareness and seek solutions.
14	The training of custody staff in resuscitation skills was not frequent enough to maintain their competence.	Accept	Resuscitation skills are part of the annual refresher completed by operational staff as part of their mandatory learning. A new package has been released to the Serco Learning Management System and is available for all operational staff to be assigned.	Serco	Completed

Recommendations	
Accepted	13
Accepted Subject to Resources/Partially Accepted	0
Rejected	1
Total	14