

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

CLUSTER: Cheshire and Merseyside

TIMETABLE	DATE
Date of inspection	10 th December 2022
Report published	06 th February 2023
Action plan submitted	28th April 2023

Rec. no	Concerns	Accepted / Rejected	Response / action taken or planned	Action owner	Update / target date for completion
	Priority Concerns				
1	Lack of GeoAmey staff adversely affected detainees in numerous ways (including transfer to court & some legal consultations)	Accept	GeoAmey have developed a Recruitment Strategy to address the current shortfalls. The region is expected to achieve the target operating model.	GeoAmey	June 2023/ update
2	Weaknesses in the approach to identifying and managing detainee's risks.	Accept	Individual risk assessments should always be carried out to manage detainees safely. GeoAmey acknowledge that reception interviews, handcuffing and Cell Share Risk Assessment (CSRA) should be completed to suit individual needs & characteristics. GeoAmey managers do attend each court custody suite monthly and complete management checks. Further development of this process is planned for Q3-Q4 of 2023, with additional training to be provided as required.	GeoAmey	June 2023/ update
3	Detainees who required a governor's authority to be released waited too long. (locked in a cell)	Accept	This concern will be addressed at the quarterly Local Stakeholders' Meetings to explore options to drive improvements.	HMCTS	Discussion at meeting scheduled for 24 th April, where the aim for improvements being evident by next meeting on 25 th July.

		<p>HMCTS will ensure that staff follow the Resulting Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) which require notifications and documents to be produced within 60 minutes of the case being dealt with. This is done as part of HMCTS assurance and governance control procedural checks.</p> <p>GeoAmey monitor monthly data to identify HMPPS sites that are not releasing within the one-hour time frame. The data will be taken to the operational meetings between HMPPS, PECS & GeoAmey to drive performance and influence change. Releases over 1hr logged and fed to PECS</p> <p>PECS will escalate to Prison Group Directors Offices if establishments fail to authorise release within the specific timescale.</p> <p>PECS participate in MOJ Cross working groups focusing on release in error and unlawful detention. Whilst the MOJ consider the feasibility of new initiatives PECS are working with HMPPS to review release procedures to ensure that these are completed in a timely manner whilst ensuring all appropriate release checks and public protection measures are completed. Recognising the timeframe for a decision is proportionate to risk and often reliant on additional partner agencies PECS have committed to</p>	<p>GeoAmey</p> <p>PECS</p>	<p>June 2023/ update</p> <p>June 2023/ update</p>
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			review the escalation for PECS suppliers.		
	Key Concerns				
4	Continuous development for custody staff was weak, particularly in areas of Safeguarding & Diversity	Accept	GeoAmey learning and development and training departments are in the process of developing a diversity training package. A monthly Safer Custody bulletin is in development which will provide staff with up-to-date information on Safeguarding and reinforce processes to follow.	GeoAmey	June 2023/ update
5	Custody staff did not always make sure detainees were aware of their rights while in court custody.	Accept	GeoAmey will provide all prisoners with their rights in adherence to standard operating procedures. Compliance will be tested through the inclusion of an 'awareness of rights' in the court visit document completed by the Senior Court Custody Manager.	GeoAmey	June 2023/update This is also tested by the authority (HMPPS) through SSDC audits.
6	Some detainee toilet facilities were in poor condition	Accept	The custody facilities are contracted to be cleaned to the British Institute of Cleaning Science (BICS) standards and will be maintained by daily custody suite inspections and the use of the cleaning schedules. HMCTS will ensure the custody facilities are clean, safe, and always well maintained. All defects will be logged with EQUANS helpdesk by HMCTS staff and escalate if necessary before it becomes an issue. Also, the introduction of the "Communications Book" will assist with the improvement of communications between the cleaning	HMCTS FM	June 2023/update

			<p>supplier (EQUANS), GeoAmey and HMCTS staff.</p> <p>GeoAmey will ensure all court custody managers are briefed to ensure the need for timely reporting of defects.</p> <p>Progress against each issue can be monitored by both stakeholders at weekly and monthly meetings between supplier and HMCTS Managers.</p>	<p>GeoAmey</p> <p>HMCTS/GeoAmey</p>	
7	In some facilities, the searching of detainees on arrival was disproportionate	Accept	All searching is risk based. The development of a Safer Custody bulletin will incorporate bulletins aimed to deliver consistent search procedures and the application of searching will be assured by senior managers.	GeoAmey	June 2023/update
8	Staff did not always offer detainees any of the limited range of distraction activities available.	Accept	GeoAmey's Safeguarding team have reviewed and updated the distraction material available which has been approved by PECS.	GeoAmey	June 2023/update
9	Placement order for children often took long to obtain, which unnecessarily prolonged their stay in court custody	Accept	<p>This issue will be formally raised with YCS and discussed at the next Quarterly Custody Focussed Stakeholder Meeting, with YCS colleagues to identify ways to improve timeliness.</p> <p>GeoAmey capture data relating to timings of placement orders which will be presented at the quarterly stakeholder meeting and with YCS to improve outcome.</p>	HMCTS/PECS/ GeoAmey	<p>June 2023/update</p> <p>Discussion at meeting scheduled for 24th April, where the aim for improvements being evident by next meeting on 25th July.</p>

10	AED were not always readily available in custody suites,	Accept	HMCTS is in the process of reviewing the custody suites within the Region to identify any sites that are not currently compliant with Policy and proceed to procure AED where required	HMCTS	June 2023/update
11	Training in resuscitation skills did not take place frequently enough	Reject	GeoAmey are delivering to their regulatory requirements, that is mandatory with the governing body. This consists of a 3-year training programme.	PECS/ GeoAmey	April 2023
12	The provision offered by liaison and diversion services was not consistent. Practitioners were not visible in all custody facilities to assist detainees	Accept	Liaison and Diversion practitioners are available at all sites across the Cluster either in person and/ or via a telephone service, although physical visibility has been impacted by the number of vacancies being carried. The report notes that practitioners in Cheshire were visible and easily contactable, but this was not consistently so for Merseyside. At the Cluster Quarterly Custody Focussed Stakeholder Meeting on 24 th April, it was confirmed that the Merseyside team have instigated daily cell visits at all sites, to raise their profile and visibility, and to better understand the needs of detainees each day.	HMCTS/ L&D	June 2023/update
13	Release planning was weak, and detainees were not informed of relevant support services.	Accept	GeoAmey have pre-release processes in place to identify vulnerabilities and detainees are provided with support and are signposted appropriately. The PECS escort contractor has Standard Operating Procedures for safeguarding.	GeoAmey/ PECS	June 2023/update

			GeoAmey Regional Manager will ensure that this process is embedded.		
	Outstanding actions from previous visit				
14	A standard risk assessment proforma should be completed for each detainee, and staff should be trained in completing it.	Accept	GeoAmey complete a cell sharing risk assessment on all detainees attending court. This risk assessment allows for the identification of any risks that will affect the management of that person during their time in GeoAmey care. Further development of this process is planned for Q3-Q4 of 2023, with additional training to be provided as required.		December 2023
15	Staff should be told how to use the telephone interpreting service, and telephones should be provided in suitable locations.	Accept	Since the last report HMCTS have provided telephones for this purpose in suitable locations across all custody suites. Focus is being driven by local GeoAmey managers to ensure the services are being used when / where necessary. A localised spreadsheet has been developed to track big word usage to inform change. GeoAmey monthly SCCM court visits are utilised to further communicate the importance and process for using the Big Word services. GeoAmey to escalate to HMCTS where telephone provision is not in place. Management Information relating to telephone interpreter services is provided by the PECS performance team. This data is reviewed and monitored at contract management	HMCTS GeoAmey PECS	June 2023

			boards. PECS will engage with “The Big Word” to improve data quality.		
16	Detainees should be transferred from cellular vehicles to the cells in privacy	Accept	<p>GeoAmey will endeavour where possible, to use smaller vehicles at some sites that could reduce detainees being overlooked by the public.</p> <p>HMCTS will further review where privacy is an issue whether there are any suitable adaptations based on solutions provided elsewhere nationally which could be considered where it is safe and proportionate to do so</p>	<p>GeoAmey</p> <p>HMCTS FM</p>	<p>Completed- April 2023</p> <p>June 2023/update</p>
17	Hearing loops, and Braille versions of key information for detainees, should be available.	Accept	<p>Hearing Loop: HMCTS to review and identify sites that do not have a system in place and proceed to procure where required.</p> <p>GeoAmey have procured Braille versions of information and make available.</p>	<p>HMCTS</p> <p>GeoAmey/ PECS</p>	<p>30 June 2023/update</p> <p>June 2023/update</p>
18	Standards of searching should be made consistent and rub-down searches within secure areas should not be routine.	Accept	All searching is risk based. The development of a Safer Custody bulletin will incorporate bulletins aimed to deliver consistent search procedures and the application of searching will be assured by senior managers.	GeoAmey	June 2023/update
19	Staff should be briefed about how to make referrals under the local authority’s safeguarding procedures if they have concerns about a	Accept	HMCTS to ensure that safeguarding leads and contact details are recirculated to GeoAmey staff	GeoAmey/HMCTS	June 2023/update

	vulnerable detainee who is being released.		GeoAmey have Safeguarding processes in place and refer to LADO or the police as appropriate. GeoAmey's Safeguard team are additionally alerted to concerns by the courts who follow up with the relevant agency.		
20	Mattresses, and blankets or warm clothing should be made available at all courts.	Rejected	Rejected due to the limited length of time detainees are in the cells (no detainees kept overnight), self-harm risks identified by GeoAmey/PECS with provision of such items.	PECS	April 2023

Recommendations	
Accepted	18
Accepted Subject to Resources/Partially Accepted	0
Rejected	2
Total	20