

31 March 2020

**HM INSPECTORATE OF PRISONS FOR SCOTLAND
INDEPENDENT PRISON MONITORING AND INSPECTION
COVID-19 PANDEMIC EMERGENCY – CONTINGENCY PLANNING ARRANGEMENTS**

In accordance with Section 7 of the Prisons (Scotland) Act 1989 and the subsequent Public Services Reform (Inspection and Monitoring of Prisons) (Scotland) Order 2015, HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland (HMIPS) undertakes a programme of inspections of Prisons, Court Custody Units (CCUs) and Prisoner Transport. As HMCIPS, I am also responsible for the independent monitoring of prisons across Scotland which is carried out on a day-to-day basis by Independent Prison Monitoring (IPM) volunteers.

As some of my other key partners have already highlighted, the coming days, weeks, and months are going to test us all. Within the past 10 days I have had to take the difficult decision to suspend all prison, court custody unit, and prisoner transport inspections, along with all services carried out by independent prison monitoring volunteers. **The suspension of independent prison monitoring in itself brings with it many challenges;** retaining a motivated workforce being key for the future.

However, HMIPS is committed, where possible, to undertake a liaison visit to any prison establishment where we believe the urgency to visit outweighs our precautions related to COVID-19.

In line with Government advice in relation to COVID-19, the HMIPS team are now working remotely, and will therefore not be taking part in any face-to-face meetings for the foreseeable future. Whilst we are adapting to new ways of working, you can continue to contact us via our normal routes – emailing individual team members or by contacting the prison monitoring and prison inspection shared mail boxes at PrisonMonitoring@gov.scot or PrisonInspection@gov.scot.

Given the above, and the ever changing situation with the COVID-19 pandemic emergency, HMIPS are developing a remote monitoring framework, providing weekly briefings to the IPMs, and are working to our Pandemic Contingency Plan.

Please note also, our news page on our website provides information on HMIPS' approach to COVID-19 and is updated on a regular basis - <https://www.prisonsinspectoratescotland.gov.uk/news/hmips-approach-covid-19>.

Meanwhile, stay safe and we look forward to resuming our work together in the future.

Wendy Sinclair-Gieben
HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, Scotland