



HM INSPECTORATE OF PRISONS

HMP GREENOCK

INSPECTION: 19-20 JANUARY 2005

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SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

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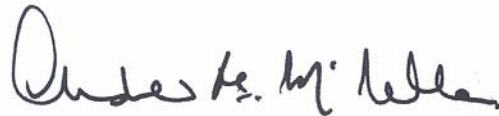
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The visit to HMP Greenock was made as part of a programme to visit every prison each year in which a full inspection is not being made. In the course of such visits the purpose is to follow up points of note from previous inspections, to examine any significant changes, and to explore issues arising from the establishment's own assessment of itself. It should not be seen as an attempt to inspect the whole life of the establishment.

1.2 The Inspection Team comprised:

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March 2005

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2. PREAMBLE

2.1 This is a short report, based on a fourth follow up inspection. Greenock Prison will receive a full inspection later this year; follow-up reports since its last full inspection have shown that almost all of the matters raised which are in the control of the prison have been addressed. No very significant new matters were considered in the course of this inspection.

2.2 Even a brief report, however, provides a context for two important messages in which the experience of Greenock Prison is not limited to that prison. The first is about overcrowding, the second is about Sentence Management.

2.3 **First**, this report illustrates the difference which is made when overcrowding is reduced. In very many reports the dangers of overcrowding have been emphasised. This report is different. Greenock prison is still overcrowded, but it is much less overcrowded than it was even a few months ago. During this inspection there were 298 prisoners in Greenock, 35 fewer than a year ago. The design capacity is 254. So at the time of this inspection the prison was 17% overcrowded.

2.4 In terms of the new Contract way of measuring, Greenock is contracted to hold 301 prisoners in 2004-05, and 300 in 2005-06: that is, it is contracted for 18% overcrowding.

2.5 All of the overcrowding takes place in Ailsa Hall. It has 131 cells. In the inspection of 2004 it held 221 prisoners, during this inspection there were 188, and the average for the last few months was 164. Clearly these numbers are likely to fluctuate.

2.6 During this inspection it emerged that some improvements are already being seen. Food is served more quickly so temperature and quality are likely to get better. More prisoners can access work. Staff have more time for contact with prisoners. More visits are available to prisoners. Staff spoke about less bullying, more time to do security checks, more time out of cell for prisoners. Staff and managers also spoke of lower stress levels and a reduction in absence. All of these benefits can be attributed to the reduction in numbers. This inspection does not allow for a full analysis of these benefits: but it does draw attention to them.

2.7 **Second**, this report follows reports on other prisons by drawing attention to weaknesses in Sentence Management. Prisoners in Greenock are told that Sentence Management is “the name given to how your time in prison will be managed to help you not to reoffend. Your involvement is very important because we will be working closely with you to find ways to stop you reoffending”. That is well said; and it emphasises the central role played by Sentence Management. Yet this report describes Sentence Management of long term prisoners at “a crucial stage in their sentences” as “inconsistent”.

2.8 Greenock is not alone in this. Weaknesses in Sentence Management are a persistent feature of inspection reports in different prisons, and a worrying feature. In the inspections of individual prisons undertaken last year, serious questions have been raised about Sentence Management in at least five. That is a high figure for a matter so fundamental.

2.9 When prisons are very much overcrowded, Sentence Management is much more difficult to carry out. But it is very important, and no less important when a prison is overcrowded. It is in the interests of prisoners, and in the interest of public safety, that Sentence Management is carried out well. Where this does not happen, and that appears to be the case in one third of Scottish prisons, both prisoners and public safety may be harmed.

3. KEY ISSUES AND NEW DEVELOPMENTS

Ailsa Hall Population Management

3.1 Ailsa Hall managers have continued to cultivate positive relationships with other establishments. This has helped them keep prisoner numbers to manageable levels and move prisoners on to other prisons in a more organised and streamlined way than previously. Structured contact arrangements have been created with Low Moss, Kilmarnock and Barlinnie.

3.2 For the last quarter of 2004, hall numbers averaged 164, although they had risen to 189 on the day before this inspection. This still compares very favourably with the 221 unlocked on the first day of the 2004 inspection or the peak that year of 237.

3.3 The lower numbers make a significant difference to the atmosphere in the hall. They have also provided an opportunity to adjust some of the regime timings. For example, exercise periods now take place at a different time which this has created the opportunity to manage the issuing of medication in a more controlled manner. It was also observed that food was served more quickly so temperature and quality are likely to get better.

3.4 Staff in Ailsa Hall spoke about some of the benefits derived from the lower numbers and changes to the regime. They included less bullying; fewer incidents and staff alarms, better staff/prisoner communication and relationships; more time to do the basics like security checks; more time out of cell for prisoners; less pressure on resources like clothing, bedding, cleaning materials etc; and more time to carry out prisoner induction and core screening.

3.5 Staff and managers also said that stress levels amongst staff were lower and this has coincided with a reduction in absence. This was supported by data provided by the prison. In May 2004 there was a cumulative total of 106 days staff absence when average prisoner numbers in Ailsa were 224. By December average prisoner numbers were 167 and the days lost in absence had reduced to 23.

Induction

3.6 The SPS national induction model is in place at Greenock. The modular programme comprises 21 elements. New admissions serving over 31 days who have not been resident in the prison during the previous six months receive all elements. Remand and very short-term prisoners receive 12 elements. Long-term prisoners receive 10 elements.

3.7 Admissions to Ailsa Hall take part in a programme in the Links Centre. Core Screening Model is used in Ailsa Hall with all admissions. The use of the Core Screening instrument gives an automatic monitoring and check that Induction has been carried out. This is an improvement on the situation a year ago. However, it is disappointing that the Induction Unit, an area intended to locate new admissions on arrival and for their first one to three days, is now an induction Area in name only.

3.8 Long-term prisoners in Chrisswell House complete their parts of the induction process on a one-to-one basis, with their nominated personal officer within the hall. This is similar to the situation a year ago: there is still no check to ensure consistency. Local management indicated that the Sentence Management Scheme for long-termers is central to induction; however there is evidence elsewhere in this report that the prison has had problems operating the Sentence Management Scheme.

3.9 Women in Darroch Hall have their Core Screening carried out at Cornton Vale. Greenock carry out a local induction on the day of arrival. The system for women appears to work well.

3.10 A new and larger Links Centre has been created in a previously disused workshop: this provides more space for agencies and for the Induction Programme. It is intended to use the current small Links Centre for pre-release purposes. This is a very good and innovative expansion of services promoting Social Inclusion.

Sentence Management

3.11 Since the last report the number of long-term prisoners admitted to Ailsa Hall has fallen markedly, which has reduced the problems being experienced at that time.

Arrangements are now in place for an initial interview and a Risk and Needs Assessment by Ailsa Hall staff. Thereafter the Sentence Management Co-ordinator takes responsibility. Most LTPs now move on fairly quickly to long-term prisons.

3.12 Arrangements for Sentence Management in Chrisswell last year were described as “satisfactory” However, compliance with the Scheme slipped during 2004. Acute demands for staffing, particularly to cover escorts meant that staff from Chrisswell were routinely diverted from Sentence Management tasks.

3.13 In December 2004 performance against targets was:

- Risk and Needs Assessments completed on time over the year: 73%
- Action Plans completed on time: 49%

3.14 It is not good that the management of very long-term prisoners at such a crucial stage in their sentences has been so inconsistent. A recovery plan is now in place and steps taken to address the backlog.

Preparation for Release

3.15 A very positive development at Greenock has been the overhaul of the prisoner external Work Placement Scheme which is part of preparation for release. The purpose and operation of the Scheme have been extensively reviewed to identify appropriate placements and to better match prisoners to the opportunities available. Inspectors had the opportunity to visit a placement with a local firm and talk to the owner, the prisoner and some of the workforce. All reports were very positive.

Programmes

3.16 The Programmes and Addictions staff have been re-organised into a Rehabilitation and Support Unit to provide greater consistency and flexibility in meeting assessed needs. This also recognises that the SPS Coreplus model will most probably require the prison to

reduce some of the interventions it currently provides. There are no programmes available which are specific to the prisoners in Chrisswell House.

Addictions

3.17 The Addictions Nurse vacancy has been filled. The prison has a KPI Target of 85% of prisoners tested being drug free, the current performance exceeds that with 90% testing drug free.

Employment

3.18 There has been no addition to the number and variety of jobs available to prisoners or to the number of jobs that offer the opportunity to gain certification. Plans continue to be made to remedy this in timber, construction and painting and decorating. On a positive note, lower prisoner numbers have meant that more prisoners can now access activity more regularly.

Healthcare

3.19 The prison has lost one of its Mental Health Nurses and has not been able to recruit another. There is still no pharmacy assistant. Two new RGN's (one in place of the MHN) have been recruited and the staffing situation in general has been more stable. The Health Centre has been fully completed since October 2004.

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