

# **HM INSPECTORATE OF PRISONS**

## **HMP LOW MOSS**

**INSPECTION: 15-16 AUGUST 2005**

**LAST FULL INSPECTION 31 MARCH – 1 APRIL 2004**



**SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE**

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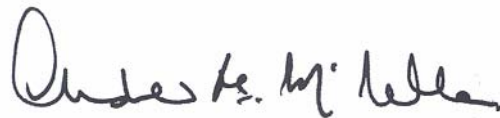
## **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The visit to HMP Low Moss 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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September 2005

## **2. PREAMBLE**

2.1 For some time there has been a widespread expectation that Low Moss prison is about to close. At one stage, it seemed possible that this inspection might not take place because the prison had closed. But in all the uncertainty, the life of Low Moss has continued: its prisoners continue to live there and its staff continue to work there.

2.2 Last year's report observed "a welcome and admirable determination among prison staff to make the best of Low Moss despite the constant and imminent prospect of closure." Twelve months on this report shows the same thing.

2.3 A new development in the last year has been the arrival of prisoners from Perth prison in significant numbers: at the time of inspection, 41% of the prisoners had been transferred from Perth. This has been well managed and has led to no violence. Indeed the reduction of violence in Low Moss is noticeable: against a KPI of five serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults there was only one. There has not been a major incident of concerted indiscipline by prisoners for three years. There was one escape in the last year. Prisoners and staff repeatedly said that they believed the reduction in violence could be attributed to the 'compartmentalising' of the dormitory accommodation which was welcomed in last year's report.

2.4 The living conditions in the unmodernised dormitories remain the worst feature of the prison. Twenty seven prisoners are living in one undivided room, which is almost impossible to keep clean and in which it would be very easy to feel unsafe. Successive reports have been highly critical of this entirely unsuitable accommodation. If Low Moss prison is to remain open steps must be taken immediately to ensure that prisoners no longer live in these unmodernised dormitories. The laundry service is also very poor. A year ago the report said "prisoners in Low Moss still cannot be guaranteed the decency every day of clean underpants which fit them". This year it is just as bad.

2.5 The quality and quantity of food in Low Moss is recognised as good by prisoners and this report confirms that. Low Moss is also to be commended for the variety and value of links which it has with outside agencies.

### **3. KEY ISSUES AND NEW DEVELOPMENTS**

#### **Arrival of Prisoners from HMP Perth**

3.1 A new development in the last year has been the arrival of prisoners from Perth prison in significant numbers: at the time of inspection, 41% of the prisoners had been transferred from Perth. This has been well managed and has led to no violence. The one issue mentioned by prisoners was the difficulty some visitors from the Dundee area and beyond were experiencing in getting to Low Moss: no special arrangements had been made to try and help these visitors.

#### **Catering**

3.2 A change to attendance arrangements means that Low Moss now serves all meals at times required by SPS Operating Standards.

3.3 The quality and quantity of the food is still very popular with prisoners. In fact, the SPS Prisoner Survey 2005 indicated that prisoners' perception of the quality of food provided had improved, especially in relation to choice: up by 12% to 67%. This is also 14% above the SPS average. The good food was confirmed by prisoners during inspection.

3.4 The introduction of a pre selection choice menu system was not considered necessary given the popularity of the current system.

#### **Clothing and Laundry**

3.5 Since the last inspection Low Moss has submitted a bid for funding to increase the capacity of the laundry. Some money has been allocated to increase the washing and drying capacity, although this still falls well short of what would be needed to make the prison self-sufficient. An individual bagging system has also been tried but the laundry inside the bags was sometimes still wet when it was given back to prisoners. There has also been an increase in the clothing issued to prisoners, which has put even greater pressure on the laundry process.

3.6 There have been no significant improvements in the clothing or laundry systems. No personal items are allowed. It is not possible for prisoners to personalise the prison kit issued to them. Access to underwear is still ad hoc and first come first served. Sometimes there are not enough items to go round.

3.7 Given these problems many prisoners “stockpile” their clothing and wash it in the sinks in the dormitories. If the prison is to remain open, it should consider putting domestic washing machines and tumble driers into some or all of the dormitories.

### **Relationships**

3.8 Since the introduction of the new staff attendance pattern, each dormitory has its own designated officers. Prisoners spoke positively about the opportunity to get to know these officers; the consistency of decision-making; and of an improvement in relationships.

### **Education, Training and Employability**

3.9 A Vocational Training Cleaning Party operates out of a converted dormitory. The facility is excellent and the quality of the training appears to be appropriate. A Forklift Driving course is no longer available: staffing problems have meant that no training has been given since May 2005. As part of the induction process prisoners are offered basic training in Manual Handling, First Aid Awareness and Health and Safety.

3.10 The prison is currently in a position where it can provide relatively menial work, contracted joinery work and textile work to a large number of prisoners. If it wants to provide more certificated work it would have to reduce the numbers involved in these activities. It cannot do both given resources available.

### **Addictions**

3.11 At the time of inspection, Phoenix House had taken over from Cranstoun Drug Services for assessment and referral of cases, and also to provide interventions for those with identified needs.

3.12 At the time of inspection it was no longer an SPS requirement to conduct Mandatory Drug Testing.

3.13 At the time of the last report, it was highlighted that “there does not appear to be a clear management structure for addictions”. At that time the Links Centre, the Health Centre, Cranstoun and the Addictions Worker all had some responsibility. There is now an Addictions Manager based in the Links Centre who coordinates addiction services. Low Moss continues to have one dedicated Addictions Nurse who sees all admissions who identify as having an addictions issue and determines whether a prisoner requires treatment, maintenance or detoxification. The prison’s approach is to attempt to stabilise individuals, reduce harm and support individuals who have a commitment to addressing their addiction needs. As before, prisoners undergoing detoxification remain in their dormitory and do not work during this period, consequently their access to the prison regime is extremely limited.

3.14 The Addictions Nurse reviews all prisoners undergoing any form of treatment on a weekly basis, which also provides an opportunity for some one-to-one support work. The prison did make plans for a methadone support group, although there was little uptake.

3.15 As part of the harm reduction focus, Phoenix House delivers the national harm reduction package during induction and prior to release, and also works with individuals in order to link them with community services. As a result of the increase in the geographical areas from which Low Moss now takes its prisoners the addiction service within the prison works with most drug services across Scotland.

3.16 Support for individuals addressing their addictions issues includes the programmes ‘Drugs Action for Change’ and ‘Alcohol Awareness’. There is also ongoing support from Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and Open Door Trust amongst others. Generally, the response to addictions at Low Moss is appropriate to the prisoner group, with a clear policy of establishing links with the community. The management structure is also clear and appropriate.

## **Induction**

3.17 The improvement in the induction system, which was noted in the last inspection report, has been maintained. The introduction of the SPS Short-Term Offender Needs

Assessment (STONA) and Community Integration Plan (CIP) has now been overtaken by the SPS Core Screen Assessment which is a simplified version of the STONA.

3.18 It was encouraging to see that the link between the Core Screen Assessment and the PR2 Computerised Prisoner Record System generates referrals to agencies and services within and outwith the prison. The database which has been developed also alerts staff to the review dates for the action plan generated by the Core Screen Assessment. This feeds directly into the wider throughcare approach for prisoners at Low Moss. The system is supported by a paper-based system which allows the system to be cross-referenced and audited. This process is well suited to the needs of the Low Moss prisoner population. The SPS national induction programme is delivered at Low Moss.

## **Programmes**

3.19 At the time of the last report residential staff delivered programmes, and demands within the prison impacted on the consistency with which courses could run. A staffing re-organisation has since taken place and there are now two full-time programme staff based in the Links Centre. Currently, these staff deliver four programmes: 'Cognitive Skills', 'Drugs Action for Change', 'Alcohol Awareness', and 'Parenting Skills'. Prisoners are referred through the Core Screen Assessment from Phoenix House and from a variety of staff within the prison. The prisoners are also able to self-refer. As before, all courses are oversubscribed and have a waiting list. The programmes staff are an integrated part of the Links Centre and work well with other agencies. However, despite being full-time programmes staff, they are still required to carry out some internal escorting and other duties which reduces the time they are able to devote to work within the Links Centre. Low Moss is well placed to meet its target for programmes.

## **Throughcare**

3.20 At the time of the last inspection it was noted that the Assessment Centre had been re-designated a Links Centre and that a variety of services were starting to integrate. It is good to note that the Links Centre has developed well in the period since that inspection. It is a bright, attractive and well maintained area providing a range of one-to-one interview rooms, group rooms, classrooms and administrative offices. Approximately 30 external agencies use



the Links Centre. Referrals to the Centre come mainly via the Core Screen Assessment and its related action plan. They also come from agencies and individual areas within the prison such as social work, chaplaincy, healthcare and induction. There is also a Links Centre self-referral form which is available in most areas of the prison: this is an excellent example of an informative and easy to use referral form for prisoners. Of note is a partnership forum meeting which is held every two months where individual agencies discuss work within the Links Centre: this allows problems to be identified and helps to provide a more integrated service. A further development has been the introduction of telephone interviews between prisoners and agencies. This is to be commended.

3.21 The introduction of a clear management structure and the identification of a Links Centre Manager has allowed the Links Centre to develop, and establish positive relationships with the agencies who use the Centre.

### **Pre Release**

3.22 There is no formal pre release programme in place. However, the introduction of the Core Screen Assessment with its related action plan should mean that by the time of release any outstanding issues have been dealt with. A harm reduction session is delivered prior to release.