



# HM INSPECTORATE OF PRISONS

## HMYOI POLMONT

**INSPECTION: 11-12 FEBRUARY 2003**

**LAST FULL INSPECTION 10-19 MAY 1998**



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

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## **ROLE/CHARTER OF HM INSPECTORATE OF PRISONS FOR SCOTLAND**

Section 7 of the Prisons (Scotland) Act 1989, as amended by the Scotland Act 1998, provides the statutory basis for the Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland, and in particular the requirement to submit an Annual Report to the Scottish Ministers. This is laid before the Scottish Parliament and published.

It is the duty of the Chief Inspector to inspect or arrange for the inspection of prisons in Scotland and to report to the Scottish Ministers on them. Each of Scotland's 16 penal establishments currently receives a full formal inspection, on a cyclical basis, every 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>-4 years. Full inspections take between a week and a fortnight depending on the size and complexity of the establishment, during which all aspects of the establishment are examined from the point of view of safety, decency, and the establishment's contribution to crime prevention. Security, discipline, control and efficiency are also examined. The Inspectorate also takes account of requirements, policies and concepts applying to the Scottish Prison Service.

Inspection reports aim to give a balanced account of conditions in the establishment, reflecting good practice and areas for improvement, as they are found.

When completed, the reports are sent directly to Scottish Ministers and are not subject to negotiation with Governors or the Scottish Prison Service. The Chief Inspector has no executive powers but is able to draw Ministers' attention to any aspects of a penal establishment which call for comment, whilst the publicity which the Chief Inspector's reports attract can be an instrument for change.

Full inspection reports are followed up in subsequent years by intermediate inspections, and these are sent to the Governor and to the Chief Executive of the Scottish Prison Service. The Inspectorate also undertakes occasional studies on a theme common to all or several penal establishments.

The Chief Inspector receives professional support from 2 senior Governors from the Scottish Prison Service who are seconded to the posts of Deputy Chief Inspector and Inspector. A Scottish Executive civil servant completes the main Inspectorate team. A number of lay consultants and researchers also contribute to the inspection process.

The Inspectorate is also responsible for inspecting legalised police cells which are used to hold prisoners awaiting trial locally in isolated areas or, following conviction, pending transfer to a main prison. Inspections are carried out every 3 years, with reports being submitted to the Scottish Ministers sent to all Chief Constables concerned and published. (The Inspectorate will shortly become responsible for the inspection of prisoner escorting arrangements as well.)

The Chief Inspector is not an Ombudsman and cannot deal with individual complaints by prisoners or staff. But groups of prisoners and groups of staff are interviewed during each formal inspection, their general views are recorded, and may form a basis for recommendations or suggestions for improvement.

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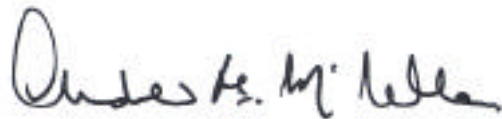
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The visit to Polmont 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 institution.

1.2 The Inspection Team comprised:

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May 2003

ANDREW R C McLELLAN  
HM CHIEF INSPECTOR OF PRISONS

## **2. PREAMBLE**

2.1 “I know I’m going to be back in soon. I see nothing that will make me change. It will be prison, liberation, prison, liberation, prison. I’ve never had a job in my life”.

2.2 The young adult who said this during the visit of Inspectors to Polmont is reaching the end of his second two-year sentence, and he is not yet twenty-one. The Establishment’s Business Definition is to provide custody “in a safe, supportive and learning environment designed to facilitate change”, and the size of this challenge ought not to be underestimated. Where so many young lives are being lived with such low expectations the need to provide opportunities for personal change and growth and hopefulness is very great; but it is no easy task.

2.3 The purpose of the visit to Polmont was 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.

2.4 Two new developments demanded particular attention. One week before the visit the first young adults had moved into a new houseblock - Iona Hall. This is the single biggest investment of the Scottish Prison Service in its new houseblock building programme; and managing the building and opening has been a large task. The building is clean and bright and the rooms are of a good standard. There are some minor initial problems; but the first impressions of prisoners and staff are most positive. For a long time it has been recognised that some of the living accommodation at Polmont has been below acceptable standards. The opening of Iona Hall will allow steps to be taken at last towards providing the decent conditions in which all the people at Polmont ought to be able to live.

2.5 The second new development is that all male young offenders and the majority of young remands are to be located at Polmont. This process has already begun, and should be completed by April 2003. This will lead to the same provision of facilities and for all young offenders, and that is to be welcomed; but for some of them Dumfries or Glenochil will have been easier for visits. In some circumstances it is possible that the management of disruptive young adults will be more difficult when all are at the same site: but this does not appear to have caused major difficulties so far.

2.6 The establishment drew attention in its self-assessment to the chronic problem of bullying. It is in the nature of this menace that much is done in secret: so it is perhaps not surprising that less was heard about it from young offenders than might have been expected. It is particularly necessary in a Yong Offenders Institution that the issue is raised over and over again; and that new ways of dealing with it are continually being sought. There is no doubt that this is taken seriously at Polmont.

2.7 The self-assessment also drew attention to two particular contributions to the life of the institution: that of the Youth Worker and that of the chaplaincy team. There was an opportunity during the inspection to learn more about these - from prisoners and from the youth worker and chaplain. There may be something especially valuable to be offered within a prison by individuals who have some room to pursue their own objectives within the general framework, and who are not immediately part of management structures.

2.8 Previous inspection reports have drawn attention to the need to provide more purposeful activity during each day. This remains a great challenge, although there was certainly evidence of energy and movement throughout the institution during the visit. Much hope is invested in a new "timetabling" arrangement soon to be introduced; and any change in the amount of outside escort duties in which staff are engaged should be of benefit to the activities of the young adults. The issue of provision of escorts is particularly acute in Polmont as the establishment accounts for 30% of all SPS escorts, but only 6% of the population.

### **3. GENERAL ASSESSMENT**

#### **Safety**

##### *Assaults/Bullying*

3.1 There had been 18 prisoner on staff assaults between April and December 2002. Two of these were identified as being serious enough to warrant classification against a Key Performance Indicator. The target for the establishment was one. The total number of prisoner on prisoner assaults for the same period was 31 with 10 identified as KPIs against a target of seven. While the establishment had exceeded both its KPIs there was no great feeling among staff or prisoners of the prison feeling unsafe. Nevertheless, a local strategy to address the issue of assaults was being developed at the time of the visit and will become an integral part of objective setting for staff at the outset of the reporting year.

3.2 There was a general consensus among staff and management that bullying was a feature of YOIs and that Polmont was no exception. However, most bullying is unreported: indeed the latest Prison Survey indicated that 86% of those asked did not report any form of bullying. This demonstrates just how difficult it is to understand and tackle the issue, although the Governor is determined to do just that.

##### *Self Harm*

3.3 There were relatively few incidents of self harm compared to other prisons - about one per week. A significant number of these incidents are carried out by a small number of young adults. As Polmont does not accept admissions direct from the Courts, initial risk assessments are carried out in the local sending prisons. Health Care staff felt that the quality of paper work accompanying young people to Polmont following assessment varied considerably between establishments but could in general be improved. There are three anti-ligature cells in the health centre and two in Iona Hall. The Listeners Scheme is well used and operating effectively. Listeners attend the ACT meeting and this also appears to work very well.

## *Addictions*

3.4 The establishment's KPI target for random drug testing is that 90% of those randomly tested will test negative for drug use. At the time of inspection the projected outturn for the year 2002-03 was 86.2%. This means that slightly more prisoners were testing positive than the figure recorded during the last visit of the Inspectorate (90% for 2001-02). It was not possible to establish the reason for this, but MDT staff felt that the relocation of long term prisoners from Dumfries may be an influencing factor. They also felt that positive MDTs were likely to increase once Polmont becomes the main location for under 21 remands from Barlinnie. Consequently, they indicated that there may be a need to review the present resources and working practices. While cannabis continues to be the dominant substance misused there had been a significant increase in the use of opiates.

3.5 The MDT figure is still one of the lowest in the SPS and the efforts of staff working in this area and Management are to be commended.

## **Decency**

### *Accommodation*

3.6 Polmont is reasonably clean throughout, although the state of decoration in Spey and Lomond Halls is poor. At the time of inspection, Nevis was closed due to redecoration, and once completed, will be followed by Lomond Hall. Plans are also in place to empty Spey to redecorate and install Electric Power in Cells (EPIC) and in cell fire detection systems, and to install EPIC and in cell fire detection systems in Argyll while it is part occupied. The state of the toilets and showers in each Hall also needs to be addressed.<sup>1</sup>

3.7 Accommodation in both Lomond and Nevis comprises six 13 cell spurs. Each of these can be isolated from each other by a grille gate during lock-up periods, and access to toilets is maintained via remotely controlled electronic locking. It appears that this regularly breaks down, sometimes for long periods of time (four months on one occasion). This needs to be resolved urgently. Plans are also in place to provide two showers within each spur,

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<sup>1</sup> The planned work on the toilets and showers in Spey started shortly after the inspection.



which will allow access to showers during patrol and other lockup periods. This is an encouraging initiative.

3.8 Spey and Argyll Halls do not have integral sanitation and apart from the bottom floor cells, no EPIC. The latter of these means that the young adults in these two Halls have to buy batteries from their wages, while the rest of the Polmont population does not. This is unfair and re-chargeable batteries, (common in adult prisons), should be made available. Sanitation is provided by Porta Potties, and in some small dormitory accommodation up to three people may have to share one of these. Furthermore, there is no water to wash hands after using the potties during periods of lock-up, although disinfectant wipes help in this respect. The arrangements for emptying the porta potties are extremely unsatisfactory. In some cases, full potties are being carried down two flights of stairs and the entire length of the hall to be emptied into an external sluice. They are heavy; often grubby; obviously unhygienic; and carrying them such distances, intrinsically unsafe. HMCIP reports have said time and again that access to proper sanitation must be provided. In this context, local plans, currently with SPS, to provide 24 hour access to sanitation are welcomed.

3.9 In Dunedin Hall (the separate cell area) the rooms are bare and the overall area is run down. There are plans to redecorate. As a matter of urgency, attention needs to be given to the build up of rubbish in the grilles outside the cell windows, as these provide a hazard and there is evidence of materials being set on fire. Management had recognised that there was a need to improve the management of disruptive prisoners in a more meaningful and cohesive way and it was anticipated that additional accommodation would be made available to develop a progression and incentive system.

3.10 Cramond Hall is a self-contained unit for approximately 60 vulnerable young people of which 20 are sex offenders. It offers a safe and supportive environment for this particular group in accommodation that was of a good standard both in terms of cleanliness and general provision. Unfortunately, the cellular electronic locking system was out of action at the time of the visit and access to night sanitation had been restricted. That said however, the general quality of life for those prisoners located within the hall was comfortable and a supportive staff ensured a relaxed and purposeful regime.

### *Association and Exercise*

3.11 Young adults in Polmont do not necessarily work each day and an excessive amount of time can be spent in their cells. In Argyll, recreation is offered on alternative days only, except to those on an “Enhanced” Regime. If a non-work day coincides with a non-recreation day, there may be no opportunity beyond mealtimes for people to associate with others. This should be reviewed.

3.12 It is extremely concerning to learn that prisoners are not offered exercise in the open air. While this might in part be compensated for by access to PE, it should not be allowed to continue. PE is not guaranteed daily and in any case, Prison Rule 75 is not being met.

### *Clothing*

3.13 There were no problems with the provision of clothing, towels, bedding etc, and the laundry was operating efficiently. However, opportunities for young people to wear their own clothes appear to be more limited than for the adult population. There also appears to be a pressure to restrict further the use of individual clothing and footwear for security reasons. Consideration should be given to the balance between individual opportunity and security concerns.

### *Food*

3.14 Generally the choice and quality of the food was reported as being “fair to good”, although there were numerous complaints about the quantity. As the Governor pointed out, given that the population is made up of teenagers and young adults with healthy appetites, SPS should consider whether a supplement might be appropriate.

### *Health Care*

3.15 The Health Centre received a Charter Mark in October 2001, in recognition of the high standard of service offered. It continued to care for a number of damaged and vulnerable young men, a Listener Scheme was in place and the Mental Health Team were a

different “uniform” to help normalise the service as much as possible. The Health Centre Manager was involved in a number of meetings and local Committees, dedicated to improving the service. These included, amongst others, the Drugs and Therapeutics Committee, the In Patient Monitoring Group, and the Patient Group Directives Working Group.

3.16 The Medical Officer provided a clinic on six days of the week (Monday – Saturday), between 10.00-12.00. Twenty-four hour emergency cover was also available if required. The Dentist and Psychiatrist also have allocated sessions and the Optician and Chiropodist attend on an as required basis. An Art Therapist, Aromatherapist and Speech Therapist also provide a service. This illustrates again the establishment’s innovative approach to this group of young people.

3.17 Following observations during previous inspections, a new self contained pharmacy was in place and structural alterations had been made to the separate cell and hospital area to create a free association area for vulnerable prisoners.

3.18 Some concern was expressed about the ability to cope when additional prisoners are received from Barlinnie and the impact of these arrivals should be closely monitored.

#### *Visits*

3.19 The availability of visits and the visits facility itself were good. Visitors said that they were treated well at all stages of the process from booking a visit to leaving the establishment once their visit was completed. There has clearly been significant work carried out to make the visits as pleasant and straightforward as possible and that good work is to be commended.

#### *Staff/Young Person Relationships*

3.20 Throughout the inspection staff/prisoner relationships were relaxed and positive. It was particularly impressive that they seemed to be based on trust and respect: reflected by an absence of shouting - a feature of Young Offender Establishments in the past. Considerable effort has been put into this at Polmont and the change of culture is to be commended. A

small but significant sign is the preferred term “young adult” as the term encouraged and used by prison staff to refer to those they formerly called “young offender”.

## **Contribution to Preventing Re-offending**

### *Induction*

3.21 The newly created Induction Area provided an excellent environment for the extended range of Induction Activities. All admissions receive a one-day Induction programme within 24 hours, all those serving more than three months return for a two week course. This is modified for those serving less than four years, with the SPS psychometric tests being omitted. For those serving long term sentences, the SPS Sentence Management Scheme applies.

3.22 The Induction Programme is multi-disciplinary, and provides a framework for ongoing Throughcare. During Induction a comprehensive booklet about Polmont is given to new admissions and also sent to their family. This was commented on positively by visitors and is to be commended.

### *Throughcare*

3.23 Polmont’s Throughcare arrangements are impressive. Partnerships have been entered into with a range of agencies, both statutory and voluntary. Nineteen such partnerships were identified from the information supplied. There is a clear link between Induction, Assessment and Sentence Management (for those serving over four years) and a similar system for those serving six months to four years.

3.24 While there is both a commitment to, and enthusiasm for developing this approach among the staff directly involved, there was some evidence that the understanding and commitment to this approach was not fully in place, particularly in the residential areas. Here staff indicated that they were often unaware of what was happening with individuals who were on taking part in a programme outwith the Halls. There is a need for close management of the processes if the good structure in place is to deliver maximum benefit.

## *Sentence Management*

3.25 The formal SPS Sentence Management Scheme is in place at Polmont. There has been slippage in the scheme, although plans are in place to recover this. Care will have to be given to the completion of the Sentence Management Records. A sample of those examined ranged from fully completed documents to those with significant omissions, e.g. gaps of two-five months with no narrative entry; no action plans in place; and assessments late or incomplete. This requires to be closely monitored.

## *Programmes*

3.26 The Programmes Unit is staffed by five full time officers and one full time relief officer, who provide a wide range of programmes aimed at offending behaviour and coping within the establishment and on liberation. These programmes include:

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Certification</b>
Cognitive Skills	Accredited
Anger Management	Accredited
Positive Parenting	Approved
Lifeline	Approved
21 hour Drug	Approved
Sensible Drinking	Approved
Career Preparation	Approved
Adapted STOP	Preferred
Confidence Building	Non-Certificated
Apprehension	Non-Certificated
Car Offending	Non-Certificated

3.27 Many of the programmes on offer have been developed at a local level or have been adapted for the young offender population and reflect the diversity of their needs. For example, low confidence is a feature of many young people. Many also feel anxious, particularly when arriving at Polmont (though many do not as they have been there before). The courses set up to address these concerns are examples of an innovative and dynamic approach displayed by the Programmes Unit who are well supported and encouraged by Management. This approach is further evidenced by the employment of the Youth Worker who has made a major impact. A “storyteller”, brought in occasionally, also offers something different.

3.28 Good relationships with specialists within the establishment were in place although there may have been a lack of co-ordination with some of the other areas delivering interventions. Good links have also been built up with community groups and external agencies, such as APEX and Fairbridge Scotland. Recent liaison with individual police forces, explaining what the prison is trying to do with its programmes is also welcomed.

3.29 However, it was difficult to do much constructive work with short term prisoners and while this is in no way unique to Polmont (and reflects other difficulties in providing work and regimes within the establishment), ways should be examined of engaging this group.

3.30 Overall we were impressed with the range of programmes and interventions in place to deal with a wide diversity of need.

#### *Industries*

3.31 The maximum capacity of the worksheds was 88 and it was very good to see that all of these spaces were taken and that there was a sense of activity around the establishment.

Work party spaces were as follows:

Joiners	16
IT Party	08
Textiles	20
VT Hairdressing	08
VT Painters	08
VT Bricklaying	08
Engineers Workshop	10
Paint Finishing	10

3.32 Other work opportunities were provided by catering, laundry, industrial cleaning, gardens and grounds, and a number of pass jobs. While there was a sense of activity, it was highlighted by management, and clearly evident, that there were still insufficient work opportunities to meet present needs, never mind future requirements when the establishment becomes the sole site for young offenders. Consequently, a timetabling system was being developed which would allow all young adults access to work for at least half of the day with the other half given over to opportunities such as PT, prisoner programmes and education.

3.33 In summary, despite the limited number of work places it was encouraging to note that an emphasis had been put on skills development and supporting employment prospects on release. There was also a greater sense of activity in the work sheds compared to recent inspections when staff had been constantly removed for escort duties or to backfill vacancies as a consequence of escorts.

#### *Employability*

3.34 Considerable resources and energy had gone into the area of employability. A cohesive and constructive strategy was starting to emerge, with a focus on initial needs assessment through to work opportunities, training and education. The establishment was linking these aspects of sentence management to potential work opportunities on release. A strong multi-disciplinary/multi-agency approach was in place, with APEX taking the lead in enhancing employment opportunities and engaging with a variety of external projects and initiatives. This offered more opportunities for young offenders to either access training or employment on liberation.

#### *Education*

3.35 The Education Department was committed by Contract to deliver a total of 35,500 learning hours. However, projections indicated that this would be exceeded and that approximately 36,000 hours would be delivered. A comprehensive programme of education, based on need, was provided, which focused very much on basic numeracy and literacy. IT classes were delivered by the education unit and an IT workshop offered further opportunities to develop this particular skill.

3.36 While it was recognised that the target output was likely to be exceeded there was also a feeling amongst education staff that the use of an additional qualitative measure would help demonstrate the positive contribution education was making to reducing offending behaviour and enhancing employment prospects on liberation.

#### *Social Work*

3.37 The Social Work Unit is staffed by one Team Manager, four full time social workers, one part time social worker and 1.5 support staff.

3.38 Each social worker has a statutory caseload of around 50 and a duty rota system was in place. The Unit is also contracted to deliver 600 hours to the Adapted STOP programme (the Team Manager is the Throughcare Manager for STOP).

3.39 All young people on a statutory order are interviewed during induction and others can put in a duty request if they require to see a social worker. Statutory work, including the preparation of parole reports and risk assessments had to take priority and as a result other areas such as contribution to programmes and one-to-one work suffered. This is not unique to Polmont: but it should be noted that not all young people were being offered the range of services which social workers were positioned to offer.

3.40 The accommodation for the Unit has improved dramatically, although high demand from various parts of prison means that the interview rooms in the Halls are not always available. Nor are they always suitable for confidential discussions.