



HMIPS

HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland
INSPECTING AND MONITORING

NEWS RELEASE LIAISON VISIT TO HMP EDINBURGH ON 1 MAY 2020

This report is part of a programme of liaison visits of prisons to be carried out by HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland (HMIPS) during the COVID-19 pandemic emergency and was conducted under HMIPS' new, albeit temporary, [Liaison Visits Framework for Prisons and Court Custody Units published in April 2020](#). These liaison visit reports provide assurance to Ministers and the wider public that scrutiny of the treatment and conditions in which prisoners are held has been continued during the pandemic.

The prison management, staff and prisoners at HMP Edinburgh are to be congratulated on providing a calm and safe environment during these difficult times.

The challenge for prisoners in being able to access both phones and showers during 30 minute blocks of time out of cell was a concern. Also, Inspectors were concerned that, at the time of the visit, those isolated under Rule 41 were not getting any access to phones, showers or fresh air. The prison was implementing Health Protection Scotland (HPS) guidance on minimising COVID-19 related risks when restricting access for those on COVID -19 related isolation, but this sat uncomfortably with human rights legislation. We are pleased to see that the SPS immediately responded to our concerns and relaxed the restrictions to include access to phones and showers.

The establishment were providing a range of in-cell activities. The arrival of mobile phones and video visit technology will radically improve participation in family life. Improved and supportive family contact, for those held in isolation should be prioritised.

There was a clear sense of a prison responding speedily and purposefully, with commitment and integrity, to each new change and development in terms of guidance and protocols around COVID-19, and of considerable efforts being made by the SPS and the Governor to communicate clearly with both staff and prisoners. Prisoners spoke about the positive relationships between staff and prisoners assisting with the transition to a different regime.

Whilst HMIPS recognise the HPS advice, we would recommend that the SPS consider taking the extra precaution of passmen being asked to wear masks. Also, given the close proximity required of first responders and the subsequent potential for transmission risk, HMIPS recommends that the SPS policy indicates the use of PPE as the default position.

In general, the prison is to be commended for doing what it could to stay in line with human rights legislation and OPCAT protocols, in what are undoubtedly extremely challenging times for the SPS.

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland, Wendy Sinclair-Gieben, was appointed in July 2018.
2. On publication the report can be found at www.prisoninspectorscotland.gov.uk
3. For further information please contact Kerry Love, Business Manager, at Kerry.Love@gov.scot or on 07939 980452.