



HMIPS
HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland
INSPECTING AND MONITORING

News Release
Annual Report 2022-23

HM Chief Inspector of prisons for Scotland, Wendy Sinclair-Gieben stated:

This is my fifth annual report, and having now inspected all 15 prisons in Scotland, I have been reflecting that while some progress has undeniably taken place, several of my recommendations have also been made repeatedly.

There is one particular issue that I and my predecessors have consistently reported on: the entrenched issue of overcrowding in Scotland's prisons. Put simply, we send far too many people to prison for the limited accommodation and resourcing available to achieve rehabilitative change.

In this reporting year, I have been considering the disparity between such commendable marked improvements which are starkly contrasted by intractable recommendations. Five years from now, it would be a delight to see the learning and improvements from the children and the female estate applied to the male estate. A root and branch review of practice is required to address the systemic recommendations we consistently repeat. Justice partners have shown us this is possible in a short time on select issues; we must now see this collaborative whole system focus applied across the field.

In February 2019, the overall number of people in custody breached 8,000 for the first time since 2013. Estimates are that for the next 12 months the prison population, having reduced during COVID-19, will again exceed 8,000 and likely continue to rise. The reason I and my predecessors have focussed strongly on overcrowding is that it affects every part of the criminal justice system, in particular the risk to the community. If individuals do not have their risks and needs addressed in prison, the rate of recidivism will remain high, and at significant cost to the public purse.

This year, the women's Community Custody Units opened their doors with the new women's prison HMP Stirling opening in June 2023. Scandinavian prisons are often cited as the model for best practice, but when these new facilities have fully bedded in, Scotland has the potential to lead the way in managing women in custody.

Scotland does not lack a positive vision, but where clarity is lacking is the strategy for tackling numbers beyond capacity whilst also recognising the pressures of changing sub populations. The development of a clear forward-looking policy approach to population management across the Justice estate is essential to move Scotland forward and ultimately reduce the risk to the community.

The SPS faced two notable contractual challenges this year with HMP Addiewell and the Prisoner Escort Custody Services contract with GEOAmeY. GEOAmeY experienced significant staffing challenges and we witnessed an inadequate service performance impacting heavily on prisons and prisoners with cancelled hospital appointments, inter-prison transfers, and late arrivals into prisons.

If prisons are to continue to be an essential component of a successful justice system that is trusted by the public to keep them safe, the ambition must also be to go further.

I am hopeful that many of the issues we have raised can be addressed and resolved. Scotland has demonstrated the ability to achieve significant justice reforms in the past. We now need to see the same commitment and focus to drive further reform with innovative thinking that can deliver a justice system Scotland deserves but still within an appropriate funding envelope. However while recognising the difficult fiscal challenges facing the Scottish Government it would be a travesty to see any delay in the arrival of the much-needed HMP Glasgow and HMP Highland.

Governors, Directors, GEOAmev, and front line SPS and NHS staff in all places have had a challenging year recovering from COVID-19. I know I speak for all my colleagues in HMIPS in paying tribute to their professionalism, and desire to support those in their care in difficult times. This is even more remarkable when it is recognised that they are dealing daily with some people who are the most difficult, dangerous, and at times highly vulnerable in the country.

I am also constantly impressed by the commitment and expertise of my team who continue to work with such dedication and professionalism. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who contributed to the work of HMIPS during 2022-2023, with particular admiration of course for our wonderful team of volunteer IPMs, who provide an advisory function to the Prison Expert Group (PEG), all of our guest inspectors from our key partner agencies, and to the Scottish Government, the SPS and NHS for their continued support.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to the people living in prisons and their families for engaging with us and giving us their welcome insights.

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.

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