



HMIPS

HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland
INSPECTING AND MONITORING

NEWS RELEASE INSPECTION OF HMP BARLINNIE

HMP Barlinnie was affected by an outdated and antiquated building design and infrastructure, with consequent high maintenance costs and staffing ratios. Despite these conditions, the Inspectorate were impressed with the positive and compassionate attitudes of the staff and the dynamic leadership of the management teams. We were pleased to find that despite the poor living conditions, prisoners largely reported feeling safe.

Staff at all levels are to be commended for developing a number of innovative activities directly suited to the demographics of the population, including the stand out facilities of the Recovery Café and the Day Care Unit.

However, the Inspectorate had deep concerns about a number of issues; the healthcare facilities, the reception holding cells and the poorly adapted cellular accommodation stood out as areas of immediate concern.

The severe state of disrepair of the rooms used in the healthcare facility, and the consequent risk posed to both patients and staff, requires urgent attention. The fabric of the building compromised infection control and patient care.

As the busiest prison reception in Scotland, the working conditions were crowded, antiquated and contained holding cells that have been repeatedly criticised by HMIPS and international inspection organisations. The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) have both severely criticised the holding cells as breaching the human rights of prisoners. It is deeply concerning that these holding cells, which were first condemned 25 years ago, remain in use. HMIPS therefore welcome the fact that resources are finally being put in place to redevelop the reception area.

The Inspectorate was also very concerned that the physical and operational structure of the prison was inappropriate for the management of the number of prisoners with disabilities, with a wholly inadequate number of adapted cells for the prison population.

At the time of the inspection, the prison was accommodating 40% more prisoners than its design capacity. This required significant numbers of prisoners to share cellular accommodation originally designed for one occupant. Cell sizes were therefore below the CPT recommended minimum for over 50% of the prison population.

The lack of suitable physical facilities was exacerbated by the limited access to opportunities for employment and rehabilitation activities. The pressures of overcrowding meant that many prisoners were constrained to the minimum requirement of one hour's exercise in the open air, with very little additional out of cell time.

While having deep concerns about the existing antiquated infrastructure, this should not be seen as an insurmountable barrier to all progress. With creative thinking, addressing the workforce capacity issues, and driving more inclusive and purposeful activity, the establishment could deliver a service more aligned to the stated vision, values and strategic outcomes of the Scottish Government and the SPS.

The management team clearly demonstrated during our inspection their capability to provide strong operational leadership in testing times, which we know have been tested further by COVID-19. We have no doubt that with continued strong leadership, combined with the dedication, commitment and compassion of staff, many of the issues raised in our report can be promptly addressed.

HMIPS recognises, however, that some of the issues identified in this report have been overtaken, or in some cases exacerbated, by the action the SPS has been obliged to take in response to the COVID-19 crisis. HMIPS nevertheless hope that the SPS and the prison management team will reflect on where action might be possible now and that, in the fullness of time, when the prison system is able to return to a more normal operating regime, all recommendations can be addressed.

The reality is that the ageing and fragile physical infrastructure means that the prison is no longer fit for purpose and we welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to the replacement of HMP Barlinnie. However, given the length of time before a new HMP Glasgow will open, interim solutions must be sought.

HMP Glasgow presents a unique opportunity to review and model the population demographics and develop an innovative design for the future of Scottish Prisons.

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.prisonssinspectoratescotland.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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