



HMIPS
HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland
INSPECTING AND MONITORING

News Release
Full Inspection of HMP Addiewell

HMP Addiewell was an unusual mix of leading-edge approaches contrasted with a real concern that the establishment's significant and enduring challenges were impacting the safety and security of the prison. It was extremely disappointing to find that many of the same issues we reported on when we last inspected HMP Addiewell, had not been resolved. Despite significant efforts by management, the lack of experienced staff remained a critical concern. Residential areas remained chronically under-resourced, in both staff numbers and experience, to deal effectively with the considerable daily challenge of managing a complex population, ensuring safety, managing the contract requirements and responding to incidents.

Feedback from prisoners via our pre-inspection prisoner survey painted a deeply troubling picture about safety, staff attitudes and access to crucial services. Only 29% of prisoners said they felt safe all or most of the time. Sixty per cent of prisoners said they had witnessed staff abusing, threatening, bullying, or assaulting another prisoner and 40% of prisoners said they had been abused, threatened, bullied or assaulted by staff themselves. Eighty-four per cent of prisoners said it was quite difficult or very difficult to access the prison GP and 69% said it was difficult to access a nurse. Similarly, 75% said it was quite difficult or very difficult to access mental healthcare. Almost half of all prisoners said it was difficult to access education.

Regrettably, we found many of these concerns appeared justified, particularly in relation to safety. The scope for protection prisoners to encounter mainstream prisoners and the lack of experienced staff on residential wings, particularly if staff had to respond to incidents elsewhere, was disturbing.

While the prison had plans in place to recruit more staff, and was investing in mentoring support for new staff, this had not come to fruition when we made a return visit in January 2023. The staffing challenges were compounded by high levels of sick leave, staff turnover and too often front-line staff complained that their managers were not providing enough visible support. Although we observed several dedicated staff in different areas of the prison responding in a highly professional, respectful, and caring way, sometimes in challenging circumstances, we also witnessed a few examples of unprofessional and disrespectful behaviour by staff towards prisoners.

Cleanliness was noticeably poor in many of the residential areas, compounded by a lack of control of the cleaning equipment.

While the prison could boast some excellent facilities in the Learning Academy more could be done to encourage participation and in a repeat of our 2018 recommendation, the contract needs revised to encourage a greater focus on participation rates rather than the opportunities provided for learning.

The prison was unquestionably leading edge within the Scottish prison system in terms of its use of technology, with for example in-cell technology and body worn video cameras. We highly commend their visionary enthusiasm and commitment to press ahead with these technological developments and hope to see them replicated across the estate. The use of Insiders or peer mentors across the prison but particularly at reception and in the early days of admission to the prison was also an excellent initiative.

Other examples of good practice that deserve recognition include staff wearing less formal dress in reception, the Early Days Centre, the emerging Recovery Centre, the commitment to restorative practices, and the range of support activities provided by the Chaplaincy Team. The Learning Academy provided good quality supportive learning in a relaxed, safe, and effective learning environment. Within family visits, trauma-informed Cyrenians workers attended all family sessions, facilitating play and offering support to families and prisoners. The Recovery Café and the establishment of strong partnerships with local partners to support prisoners with addiction issues in the prison and back into the community was commendable.

We praise healthcare staff for their unfailing dedicated commitment to their roles in extremely difficult circumstances and there were several aspects of good practice. However, the number of vacancies in the team was impacting significantly on their ability to provide an effective service, therefore it was assessed as poor, with several aspects compromising patient outcomes and safety.

In conclusion, HMP Addiewell remains a frustrating conundrum. It is ahead of its SPS counterparts in embracing the potential of digital technology and shows commendable drive and commitment to embed new approaches such as the Early Days Centre and the use of 'Insider' peer mentors, but it struggles to provide the basics of a safe controlled environment. Until the enduring recruitment and retention issues are fully resolved, and the prison can secure and retain sufficient experienced staff in all residential areas there will continue to be an unacceptable risk to the safety of those in their care and a risk of continuing periods of instability.

The SPS must support the Sodexo management team in their efforts to bring this much needed stability to the prison and explore whether further revision to the contract would be mutually advantageous in delivering a more stable prison that is both able and encouraged, through the contract, to make best use of the significant opportunities for rehabilitation focussed activities that unquestionably exist within the prison.

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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