



HMIPS

HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland
INSPECTING AND MONITORING

News Release
Full Inspection of HMP Kilmarnock

Despite a COVID-19 breakout immediately prior to the inspection, the prison was clearly stable and well managed, with most prisoners reporting feeling safe. Inspectors noted many positive elements about the running of HMP Kilmarnock. The prison was calm and orderly, with staff who knew their roles and worked to promote constructive relationships with prisoners. The use of IT had long been a positive feature at HMP Kilmarnock, with kiosk technology providing important information for prisoners as well as offering them the ability to take responsibility for ordering food and make appointments.

Inspectors welcomed the individualised approach to case management in the Separation and Reintegration Unit (SRU) and noted that the enhanced case management process was working well, with strong multi-disciplinary relationships between prison-based social work, psychology, case management and NHS teams. However, the input of prison officer key worker's into the case management process was limited and should be developed further.

There was a strong commitment to promote a culture of continuous improvement from the top of the organisation and clear efforts to recognise good performance by individuals and teams. The active support for prisoner information committees and consultation with prisoners was also impressive.

The picture on Equality and Diversity was more mixed, with caring compassionate support for transgender prisoners fully demonstrated, but stronger efforts needed to support foreign nationals.

In terms of protecting core human rights, despite recognising the requirement for HMP Kilmarnock to follow Public Health Scotland's guidance, HMIPS were concerned to note that, in common with other establishments, agreed COVID-19 isolation procedures meant that the commitment to one hour's daily outside exercise was compromised. It is recognised that this is a national issue. HMIPS are clear that while recognising the imperative to protect the health and life of everyone in the prison, the tension between that and the fundamental right to one hour's fresh air every day for all prisoners cannot be overlooked. The size of the very small double cells was also disturbing in a human rights context since they breach the expected size guidelines.

Another issue of significant concern to inspectors was the search area in reception which was not fit-for-purpose at the time of our visit with a body scanner not only being inoperable due to SPS guidance, but blocking areas where full privacy for a full body search might be more securely maintained.

In our last inspection of HMP Kilmarnock, HMIPS raised the lack of support for those with additional learning support needs, which was a significant barrier to engaging some prisoners in learning activities. It was deeply disappointing to see this issue remained unresolved, so we seek renewed commitment to address this issue quickly.

As we have seen in other prisons, the length of time that some prisoners were kept continuously in the SRU was also worrying; it is recognised this is a national issue for the SPS and not for Kilmarnock. HMIPS will be exploring the issue more thoroughly through our own thematic review into SRUs and isolation.

Training for prisoners involved in laundry duties and cleaning the prison should be tightened. In general visits ran well, with sensitive and considerate oversight of security in the visits hall, but information for families in the visitor centre and visits hall could be improved and the Family Strategy Group should be re-energised.

The requirements for prison healthcare have changed since the prison was built and it was noted that the current infrastructure and fabric of the Health Centre was no longer considered fit-for-purpose. Urgent effort is required to enable the existing rooms to be used for clinical use and also plan for the future. Concerns were escalated during the inspection to the SPS, NHS Ayrshire and Arran, and Serco with a request for a recovery plan by the close of the financial year. A joint action plan has now been developed.

Prisoners complained to inspectors about a 20-week wait to see mental health services and inspectors identified a need to address that and develop alternative routes of support. Some of the processes underpinning patient confidentiality need tightened and communication between social care providers and healthcare staff could be improved to secure better outcomes for patients.

Overall, while recognising the areas where improvements are needed, there is no doubt that HMP Kilmarnock was a well-run establishment which holds its own alongside its SPS public sector counterparts in terms of its care and treatment of prisoners and the sense of order and safety provided. The approaching end of the SPS/Serco contract for the operation of HMP Kilmarnock could, however, be an unsettling time for staff and prisoners. It could also be a time when a focus on meeting and securing minimum contractual obligations inadvertently inhibits not only creativity and service development, but longer-term refurbishment of the accommodation for prisoners and staff. We encourage the SPS and Serco to work constructively together to ensure that does not happen.

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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