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HMIPS
HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland
INSPECTING AND MONITORING

PRESS RELEASE

HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland publishes inspection report on HMP Shotts

Date: 3 November 2026

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland (HMIPS) has today published its report on a full inspection of HMP Shotts, carried out in November 2025. The inspection was conducted in partnership with Health Improvement Scotland (HIS), the Care Inspectorate (CI) and His Majesty's Inspectorate Education Scotland (HMIES).

The inspection found that Scotland's national prison for long-term adult male prisoners had made positive progress since its previous inspection in 2022. Three standards - health and wellbeing, organisational effectiveness and opportunities for purposeful activity – were rated better than on our previous inspection. The prison also demonstrated strong staff-prisoner relationships across many areas of prison life and delivered several examples of innovative and effective practice.

Overall, HMIPS assessed that two standards had dropped from being rated as satisfactory to generally acceptable - Effective, Courteous and Human Exercise of Authority (Standard 4) and Respect, Autonomy and Protection against Mistreatment (Standard 5). Organisational Effectiveness (Standard 8) had improved from generally acceptable to satisfactory and Health and Wellbeing (Standard 9) had improved from poor to generally acceptable. The remaining standards were rated the same as the 2022 inspection.

HMP Shotts had addressed a number of concerns identified during the previous inspection. Healthcare services showed notable improvement and inspectors highlighted the introduction of a clinical pharmacist service, improved medical cover, an effective out-of-hours clinical escalation pathway and a proactive approach to health promotion and prevention activity.

Inspectors also found positive and respectful relationships between staff and prisoners throughout the establishment. The National Integration Centre was recognised for providing an excellent introduction to long-term custody, with staff creating a supportive environment for men beginning lengthy sentences. The prison's mentoring scheme for newly recruited staff and its "soft landing" approach for new officers were identified as examples of good practice.

The report highlights the prison's success in supporting progression, a long-standing concern of ours across the Scottish Prison Service. Despite limited access to some programmes and recruitment issues in the psychology team, the deputy governor was taking a proactive approach to the ways in which prisoners could demonstrate progression during

their sentence and the highest number of prisoners of any prison in Scotland were being transferred to the National Top End and the Open Estate. Despite the long-term nature of the prison population and the desirability of men being liberated from less secure conditions, about 100 men a year were nevertheless released from Shotts. Services for them were mixed. While support for benefits and employment was available, independent housing advice was not routinely provided.

The inspection identified a number of areas requiring improvement. Prisoners had little confidence in the complaints system, with concerns about confidentiality, delays in responses and lost complaint forms. Inspectors also highlighted weaknesses in the management of prisoners subject to segregation in residential areas (which inspectors are seeing more of than historically), inconsistent access to fresh air, shortcomings in support for foreign national prisoners, concerns about the effectiveness of anti-bullying arrangements, alongside some unwillingness to challenge inappropriate behaviour and some complacency around safety. Care plans for those on the SPS Suicide Prevention Strategy -Talk to Me - and those being managed because they were under the influence of substances, were incomplete and not always reviewed by healthcare staff.

Issues were also identified around food quality, hygiene management in residential pantries, the availability of clothing and cleaning equipment, and the continued routine use of strip searching alongside body scanning.

Nearly a quarter of the men held during the time of the inspection were over 50. The age of the prisoner population nationally is rising and not enough is being done to plan for their future support needs. The report tells the experience of one terminally ill man and the staff responsible for his care. With only four accessible cells, patient needs were constantly being assessed and prioritised, meaning some who had been allocated these cells were moved out to accommodate someone with greater needs.

His Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland noted that HMP Shotts is in a stronger position than many other prisons, benefiting from a settled long-term population and an absence of overcrowding, and encouraged the establishment to build further on the progress already achieved.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

- HMP Shotts is Scotland’s only prison dedicated solely to long-term adult male prisoners and has a design capacity of 538.
- The prison population at the time of inspection was 539 prisoners.
- The inspection was conducted between 17 and 21 November 2025.
- HMIPS assesses prisons against nine Standards for Inspecting and Monitoring Prisons in Scotland.
- HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland, Sara Snell, was appointed in February 2025.

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- The full inspection report for HMP Shotts is available at www.prisonsinspectoratescotland.gov.uk
- For further information please contact Kerry Love, Head of Business Management at kerry.love@gov.scot or on 07939 980452.