



**HMIPS**  
HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland  
INSPECTING AND MONITORING

**News Release**  
**National Mid-Year Independent Prison Monitoring Report**  
**for the period April to September 2023**

The Public Services Reform (Inspection and Monitoring of Prisons) (Scotland) Order 2015 came into force on 31 August 2015. From this date HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland assumed overall responsibility for the monitoring of prisons, which is carried out on a day-to-day basis by around 100 volunteer Independent Prison Monitors (IPMs).

During this report period, IPMs observed some good practice in all the prisons in Scotland. The roll out of in-cell phones has made a huge difference to the lives of prisoners. Where they exist, the Recovery Cafes are doing excellent work, but unfortunately cannot cater for the number of people who could benefit from them. In all prisons, IPMs witnessed staff caring for people with compassion. It was evident that for many staff working in prisons it is not simply a job, but a vocation, and they are dedicated to improving people's lives. However, IPMs have serious concerns about the SPS ability to 'transform lives and unlock potential', whilst the number of people held in Scottish prisons exceeds the capacity it was designed for, whilst simultaneously not having a full complement of staff.

Too many people are held on remand and too many continue to be given short sentences. The regime in many prisons is inadequate, with too many prisoners spending far too long confined to their cells. There is not enough meaningful activity and the opportunities for prisoners to access rehabilitation and progress towards release are poor. SPS senior managers and the Scottish Government urgently need to look at the resources available to prisons if they truly want to offer rehabilitation, reduce the prison population and end the cycle of crime and imprisonment that blights so many lives.

The current key national concerns of IPMS are:

- **Population:** Overcrowding caused more prisoners to have to share a cell, some of which are not suitable for sharing. The remand population remains stubbornly high and the SPS estate is not adequately equipped to deal with this rising population.
- **Regime:** Related to the issues of overcrowding, the regime available for many prisoners is not acceptable. Prisoners are spending too long locked in cell without access to rehabilitative activities.
- **Progression:** Many prisoners are unable to access offending behaviour courses and move to less secure conditions to help them prepare them for release. HMIPS are conducting a thematic review of progression which is nearing completion.
- **The cost of living:** As in the rest of the country, the costs of goods/food for prisoners are rising without a matching increase in prisoner wages. This not only harms prisoners, but also increases the cost of imprisonment on their families who often supplement their earnings.
- **Prisoner escorts:** The current deliver of the prisoner escort contract is failing. Transfers between prisons are routinely cancelled. In the worst cases escorts to funerals and hospital appointments are cancelled. Prison staff are trying their best to undertake the escort, but it is not part of their remit, and it causes shortages elsewhere in the prison.
- **Medication:** Across nearly all prisons, evening medication was being issued at inappropriate times. There is also a national shortage of prison healthcare staff.

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- **Complaints:** Prisoners lack faith in the SPS prisoner complaints system. It does not follow best practice, as advised by the SPSO, and should be reviewed by the SPS as a matter of urgency.
- **Staffing:** Several prisons reported issues with lack of staff, which impacts the prison's ability to provide services and increases the demand on existing staff.

**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.prisoninspectoratescotland.gov.uk](http://www.prisoninspectoratescotland.gov.uk)
3. For further information please contact Kerry Love, Business Manager, at [Kerry.Love@gov.scot](mailto:Kerry.Love@gov.scot) or on 07939 980452.

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