



HMIPS

HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland
INSPECTING AND MONITORING

NEWS RELEASE

LIAISON VISIT TO HMP SHOTTS ON 3 JUNE 2020

This report is part of a programme of liaison visits of prisons that are carried out by HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland (HMIPS) during the COVID-19 pandemic emergency and was conducted under HMIPS' new, albeit temporary, [Liaison Visits Framework for Prisons and Court Custody Units published in April 2020](#). These liaison visit reports provide assurance to Ministers and the wider public that scrutiny of the treatment and conditions in which prisoners are held has been continued during the pandemic.

The prison came across as calm and orderly. Given the serious incidents that had occurred recently in HMP Shotts, the management and staff are to be congratulated on the way they have responded to those incidents and the additional challenges posed by COVID-19.

The prison management team and staff were aware of their responsibilities regarding human rights and striving to balance that responsibly with implementing Health Protection Scotland (HPS) guidelines.

In light of the COVID-19 advice received from HPS, the prison was running an extremely limited regime. As with other prisons, there was a tension between the rights set out under Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights and the early restrictions having to be imposed when following HPS guidelines. The prison was acting in a responsible, proportionate and justifiable manner, always seeking to provide the maximum opportunities for access to phones, showers and fresh air, etc. within the HPS guidelines.

Although there were no prisoners being isolated on Rule 41 during the visit, there was still a concern from HMIPS that not offering full access to a phone to contact family sits uncomfortably with human rights legislation. HMIPS are pleased to see that this has since been addressed.

Time out of cell appeared to be longer than Inspectors had seen in recent liaison visits to other prisons and, although purposeful activity had been reduced dramatically, there were still opportunities to complete distance learning courses and some in-cell learning activity provided by the establishment and Fife College.

The arrival of in-cell telephony and video visit technology, which was being tested on the day of the visit, will radically improve participation in family life. Communication with prisoners appeared good, and it was encouraging to see that Prisoner Information Action Committees were still running regularly.

It is extremely difficult to empower prisoners when having to impose such a restricted regime. HMIPS were concerned that COVID-19 information was not being translated into languages other than English and we would urge HMP Shotts to look at addressing this issue in the future.

Relationships between Scottish Prison Service staff and the Healthcare Team were seen as excellent, and HMIPS welcomed the Healthcare Team Recovery Plan to address the increased waiting lists and reintroduction of suspended clinics that have occurred over the COVID-19 pandemic.

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.