



HMIPS

HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland
INSPECTING AND MONITORING

NEWS RELEASE

LIAISON VISIT TO HMP BARLINNIE 15-16 JULY 2020

This report is part of a programme of liaison visits of prisons 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 was clean, safe, and orderly, and the prison management team are to be congratulated on the way they rose to address the additional challenges created by COVID-19.

In light of COVID-19, and the advice received from Health Protection Scotland (HPS), the prison was running an extremely limited regime. The arrival of in-cell telephony and video visit technology, will radically improve participation in family life, and it was encouraging to see indoor recreation being reinstated for the first time on the day of our visit. Communication with prisoners appeared satisfactory.

The prison management team and staff were aware of their responsibilities regarding human rights and striving to balance that responsibly with implementing HPS guidelines. There was clear commitment and evidence of planning towards the reintroduction of visits, education, work parties and other purposeful activity. Similarly the prison had endeavoured to minimise the disruption to progression plans for prisoners.

It was encouraging to see information for prisoners having been translated into foreign languages, indicating that the prison was responding to the gaps in Equality and Diversity planning identified in our last inspection report. However the challenges posed by the lack of accessible cells for disabled prisoners and an ageing Victorian prison, with steep stairwells and no lifts, continue. We therefore hope that progress with development of a new HMP Glasgow will continue to be prioritised.

Under the current lockdown restrictions there is a tension between the rights set out under Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights and the restrictions having to be imposed by HMP Barlinnie. Whilst acknowledging that time out of cell was limited and that some prisoners were only afforded 45 minutes per day in fresh air, HMP Barlinnie had introduced a regime in D Hall South Lower (DSL) where COVID-19 related rule 41s were able to access showers, the phone and fresh air daily. This was in contrast to other establishments in the early days of lockdown and should be commended. Introducing a cordless phone to allow for a translation service to have access to non-English speaking prisoners in DSL has also to be commended.

We welcomed the action taken since our last full inspection to produce plans and a timetable for modernisation and reconfiguration of the reception area. We remain concerned however that the urgent refurbishment of the healthcare and reception areas and the need for more accessible cells have been delayed by the COVID-19 crisis.

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.