



HMIPS

HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland
INSPECTING AND MONITORING

NEWS RELEASE

LIAISON VISIT TO HMP CASTLE HUNTLY 11 & 16 FEBRUARY 2021

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 the [HMIPS - Liaison Visit Framework - Prison and Court Custody Units](#). 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.

At the time of the visit, HMP Castle Huntly was to be commended on being one of the last prison establishments in Scotland able to record no positive COVID-19 cases amongst its prison population. An open establishment, operating as a single household with unrestricted movement between buildings during the day, makes that achievement all the more impressive.

It is pleasing to see 13 areas of good practice highlighted by inspectors. We commend both staff and residents on the way they responded to the cancellation of the much anticipated home leave over Christmas due to the reintroduction of national restrictions. We also commend residents on their continued forbearance with national restrictions that have limited the opportunities for outside placements and home leaves that would normally be a feature of life in an open establishment. We hope that the opportunities provided by the lifting of national restrictions will be maximised fully and swiftly in the months ahead to help residents move forward.

We applaud the flexibility shown when providing opportunities for outside exercise and continued access to prison library resources. Health Improvement Scotland inspectors also identified a number of areas of good practice including continued access during the pandemic to substance misuse, mental health and occupational therapy support.

Whilst applauding many aspects of the work done by the whole team at HMP Castle Huntly, we also identified a few areas where further action is desirable. We encourage management to consider the scope to reintroduce communal dining and provide access to microwaves for use in the evening. We encourage greater access to additional visits, particularly at the weekend, whenever there is unused capacity, and we wish to see an immediate end to restrictions on the number of children allowed on a visit.

We fully recognise the constraints imposed on the SPS by national COVID-19 restrictions.. We nevertheless encourage HMP Castle Huntly to creatively review with Fife College what more can be done to maximise opportunities for purposeful activity, access to remote learning and indoor gym facilities for residents, with opportunities to secure vocational training qualifications and support the development of independent living skills.

Urgent refurbishment of the holding cells is required and we question whether the size and number of accessible cells at HMP Castle Huntly is adequate. Moreover there is no doubt that substantial modernisation and refurbishment of the accommodation blocks, with development of single cell accommodation for the whole population, or investment in an alternative site, is essential in the longer-term if HMP Castle Huntly is to provide the sort of open estate experience that residents have a right to expect from a modern prison service.

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.prisoninspectorscotland.gov.uk
3. For further information please contact Kerry Love, Business Manager, at Kerry.Love@gov.scot or on 07939 980452.