



**HMIPS**

HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland  
INSPECTING AND MONITORING

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **LIAISON VISIT TO HMP YOI CORNTON VALE 7- 8 OCTOBER 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.

HMIPS recognise that the liaison visit took place at a time when COVID-19 restrictions were being eased. HMP YOI Cornton Vale was calm and orderly during the visit and inspectors were impressed by the care and compassion demonstrated by staff, and the efforts made to engage prisoners in activities, despite the more restricted range of opportunities available while construction of the new national facility continued.

The management team are to be congratulated on their communication and engagement with prisoners and staff, which was appreciated by everyone spoken to in the prison. The health and wellbeing survey and follow-up focus groups asking prisoners about the care they had received in HMP YOI Cornton Vale demonstrated the SPS and NHS teams' commitment to the principle of joint continuous improvement. Indeed there was a strong sense of the SPS and NHS teams working well together to keep prisoners safe. Inspectors noted that the standards of cleanliness and approach to infection control were excellent.

HMIPS noted the significant work underway to addressing the CPT recommendations and welcomed the development of a trauma informed environment with planned training for the SPS and NHS staff in gender specific approaches, and in particular for dealing with multifaceted complex needs. It was pleasing to see mental health staff were involved in the assessment process for the SPS Suicide Strategy - Talk to Me.

HMIPS welcomes the significant reduction in levels of violence achieved over the last two years and the positive approach adopted to the complaints process. We particularly appreciate that pre-release planning was provided for both convicted and remand prisoners and encourage a similar approach by all prisons.

We found a great deal to commend and applaud at HMP YOI Cornton Vale. However, we continue to have concerns that the lack of high security psychiatric care options for women in Scotland may leave women remaining in HMP YOI Cornton Vale at times in segregation, when a specialist psychiatric care setting would be more appropriate to their care needs. NHS Forth Valley need to develop an escalation process for those experiencing delays in accessing appropriate treatment.

Although these and other action points summarised in Annex A of the report were identified, the overriding impression gained by both HMIPS and HIS inspectors was of a prison moving forward with a professional, caring, and supportive regime being provided by SPS, NHS and Education staff. We welcome the fact that many of the women, some of whom were quite vulnerable with complex mental health needs, were themselves quick to recognise and appreciate the care and support being shown to them.

Finally we will continue to monitor the development of the women's estate and look forward to seeing HMP YOI Cornton Vale develop further.

**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](http://www.prisonssinspectoratescotland.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.