



NEWS RELEASE
LIAISON VISIT TO HMP INVERNESS 12 AND 13 MAY 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 continued during the pandemic.

HMP Inverness is a small Victorian prison where prisoners told inspectors they felt safe and appreciated the support provided by staff. The positive relationships and good communication developed between staff and prisoners undoubtedly assisted the prison during the more difficult phases of the pandemic, particularly when COVID-19 outbreaks had occurred. At one point COVID-19 related staff absences had required the prison to seek detached duty support from other prisons, but generally the prison had been able to work through the challenges unaided.

The encouraging reduction in violence and incidents of self-harm indicated a calm environment had been developed by management and staff, while those who had been looked after in relation to mental health issues and any potential suicide risk were positive about the support provided. Prisoners spoke positively too about the quality of the meals provided, which is not always the case.

Inspectors identified seven areas of good practice including excellent working relationships with community partners, which assisted with getting access to drug and alcohol services on release. An outcome tracking initiative for use with those being released looked promising. With the support of the medicines management team, nurses were now able to provide medications based on clinical judgement without always having to see the GP, and a member of the administrative team had been given effective training to allow medication rounds to proceed without delay in the event of staff absence.

However a number of issues did concern HMIPS. The safer cells were very austere and need to be upgraded to provide a more caring environment, while the holding cells were in poor condition and need refurbishment, despite work apparently having been done on them not so long ago. Unfortunately the SPS will need to continue to invest in maintaining the aged infrastructure until the new HMP Highland comes on stream. The fabric of the building needed to be urgently reviewed to allow more effective cleaning and decontamination of residential areas. More structured support around infection control by NHS Highland was also needed, and the SPS and NHS Highland should work together to address technical IT issues affecting the quality of remote consultations.

Support for foreign nationals needed improving, with access to key information in their own language and greater use of translation services. In particular there was a lack of referral forms in alternative languages to facilitate access to health services when required.

While support for release planning was generally very positive, staff must be given sufficient time to fulfil these important roles effectively and expertise should be shared and developed within the team. HMP Inverness should also continue to work with their community partners to implement the SHORE standards, and make the aspirations in relation to supporting people into suitable accommodation a reality for every liberated prisoner.

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