



**HMIPS**

HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland  
INSPECTING AND MONITORING

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **LIAISON VISIT TO HMP POLMONT 26-27 AUGUST 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.

At the time of our visit the atmosphere in HMP YOI Polmont was calm and orderly, and HMIPS commend management and staff on their success in restricting the risks around the spread of COVID-19. It was clear that efforts were being made to return the establishment to a more normal regime and reintroduce activities in a controlled manner.

It was pleasing to see the significant strides that had been taken by the prison healthcare team to address the issues raised in our last full inspection report, and encouraging to see several areas of good practice identified by Health Improvement Scotland inspectors. Relationships between the NHS and SPS teams also appeared more positive.

A number of elements of good practice were identified on the SPS side, and inspectors were particularly impressed by the introduction of Health and Wellbeing helplines into each residential flat to enable young people and women to conduct confidential calls with support agencies.

In relation to the 13 Action Points in the report, HMIPS would particularly draw attention to the need to ensure fairness and equity of access between different groups of prisoners in relation to recreation times, access to fresh air, face-to-face visits and the need to provide fair access and maximise opportunities for work and purposeful activity.

HMIPS recognise the challenges in providing appropriate opportunities for all young people and women to engage in purposeful activity, particularly whilst having to respect physical distancing guidelines, and are concerned to ensure that should not be done by compromising access to fresh air or recreation.

HMIPS urge SPS Headquarters to take swift action to reintroduce offender management programmes and work as creatively as possible to address the backlog of people awaiting opportunities to go on such programmes. In the meantime, we encourage dialogue with the Risk Management Authority and the Parole Board on how alternative forms of evidence on action taken to reduce the risk of reoffending might best be presented to the Parole Board for Scotland. It is not acceptable that anyone should be held back from securing parole for reasons outside their own control.

#### **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](http://www.prisoninspectorscotland.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.