



HMIPS

HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland
INSPECTING AND MONITORING

NEWS RELEASE

LIAISON VISIT TO HMP YOI GRAMPIAN 4-5 NOVEMBER 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.

HMP YOI Grampian was performing strongly in its handling of COVID-19 risks and there was clear evidence of appropriate action being taken, to minimise transmission risks. It was very encouraging to see the progress that had been made since our last full inspection on securing a solid SPS staffing base, which contributed to a calmer, controlled atmosphere where staff felt confident in their roles.

Recruitment challenges and staff absences remain a concern for healthcare staff despite the ongoing commitment from the Health and Social Care Partnership to seek solutions. There was, however, stability among a small core staff group, but this group of NHS staff reported that they felt tired, over-stretched and stressed and this is a key concern. As a priority there is an urgent need to address the nursing and pharmacy staffing concerns and secure a controlled drugs licence.

There was evidence of good communication, between SPS and NHS and the strength of the relationships between the SPS, NHS and external parties around pre-release planning was highly commendable. HIS inspectors identified three areas of good practice; action to promote safe self-management of wounds, prioritisation of mental health activities with ability to support face-to-face and virtual visits, and the work of the addictions team including the first prison healthcare team nurse to undertake the Queen's Nursing Programme.

As we have recorded with other prison liaison visits, the backlog in prisoners awaiting offender behaviour programmes is a serious concern; we urge SPS HQ to address this as quickly as possible and continue to ramp up opportunities and consideration of alternatives for progression across the prison estate. These issues are compounded locally by staffing shortfalls in the progression and psychology teams, which needs to be addressed as a priority.

Due to physical distancing restrictions limited education and work opportunities were being provided, although not on the same scale as before COVID-19. Although recognising the difficulties facing the prison in ratcheting up capacity further, and applauding the action taken to encourage self-learning, we challenge the SPS to consider what more may be possible given the importance of purposeful activity in supporting good mental health for those who otherwise face too many hours locked in their own cells.

Processes operating in the SRU were lawful and prisoners were getting appropriate access to fresh air, showers and telephones, but we recommend tightening procedures on the communication of information between shifts.

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.