



**HMIPS**

HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland  
INSPECTING AND MONITORING

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **INSPECTION OF HMP YOI POLMONT – 29 October – 9 November 2018**

The opportunities afforded by HMP YOI Polmont for young people were evidence-based, leading edge and impressive. The prison showed considerable progress since the last full inspection. However, the take up of the opportunities on offer remained hugely problematic and unresolved since the last inspection, particularly noticeable amongst remand prisoners.

Detention offers a unique opportunity to overcome social, criminogenic and community barriers to living a crime free life, and we would urge the Scottish Government and the SPS to reconsider their approach to remand prisoners.

There was a comprehensive strategy in place for the prison's future, with a clear communication plan and it was evident that the Governor and her team had tried to ensure that staff were trained, experienced, informed and engaged to manage the complex cohorts in their care. Prisoners and staff reported they felt safe and there was evidence of positive and respectful relationships between staff and prisoners.

Inspectors welcomed a number of very positive initiatives, including the impressive partnerships with the community to deliver an enticing and relevant regime with multiple opportunities. In particular, inspectors appreciated the co-design approach to working with organisations in the prison to take full advantage of their expertise.

Inspectors observed a range of good practices, including involving prisoners in the development of process within induction, chaplaincy, education, and the diversity and inclusion strategy. We welcomed the focus on the family, the comprehensive and interactive induction process, Positive Futures Planning, and enhanced cohort specific training for staff. Young People's involvement in the Year of the Young People Committee and the use of peer mentoring stood out.

#### **Healthcare**

The healthcare team at HMP YOI Polmont was a well-motivated and caring workforce, committed to providing a high quality of care to their patients. There were examples of good practice in health care. Inspectors welcomed the approach to substance misuse, the screening assessment by trained mental health staff and the rapid referral to psychiatry if required. However, there were a number of areas identified for improvement that contributed to a low performance rating.

Since the inspection, we have welcomed the responsive attitude shown by the NHS Forth Valley healthcare provider, and the significant improvements and investment. We note that many of the challenges experienced by NHS Forth Valley in Polmont are a reflection of national themes experienced in many prisons across Scotland, which we hope will be addressed e.g. electronic prescribing, difficulties with recruitment and lack of a national formulary.

#### **Technology**

HMP YOI Polmont would benefit from introducing greater technology to assist in prisoner management. For example a kiosk system (a touch screen computer based in each hall that allows prisoners to book activities and order food), skype, BACS payments to allow families to pay money into a prisoners account and telemedicine. In cell telephony would allow prisoners to maintain contact friends and family at any anytime, helping at times of stress,

with scope to access helplines with more privacy. Kiosks or in-cell computers would allow greater personal responsibility and release staff from mundane duties, creating efficiency savings to allow frontline staff more time to deliver the therapeutic approach that Polmont advocates.

### **Learning and Skills**

The prison offered a wide and suitable range of good quality employment and training opportunities to all convicted prisoners, but a more limited range to women and remand prisoners. The work areas were modern and well equipped. On a typical day, almost 30% of the available spaces were not filled. Although an improvement on previous years, this must remain a priority for the Governor and her team.

### **Case management**

Prisoners and their families were involved in the decision-making process for progression and Integrated Case Management (ICM). This was augmented by the excellent practice of ICM staff delivering family awareness visits to support families understanding and ability to relate to the prison surroundings. A related example of good practice involved prisoners having a key involvement on the Year of the Young People Committee, taking responsible roles in the organisation and co-ordination of events within the establishment.

Supporting prisoners to maintain positive family ties supports reintegration. Yet prisoners' families, and children in particular, often pay a very high price for their family member's imprisonment. HMP YOI Polmont has perhaps the strongest case in Scotland for the provision of a purpose built, well-resourced family visitor centre.

Inspectors were surprised that children under the age of 18 were disadvantaged when it comes to discharge grants. This was escalated for a rapid resolution. HMIPS has since been informed that the SPS is introducing discharge grants for under 18s.

### **Conclusion**

HMP YOI Polmont is a leading edge prison, demonstrating the SPS investment in attempting to break the offending cycle at an early age, through evidence based practice. The SPS have worked well in building solid platforms for a positive future. Inspectors identified areas requiring improvement or development, and found NHS Forth Valley, the SPS, the Governor and her team immediately responsive. We look forward to seeing the momentum maintained at the local, national and government level.

### **Next Steps**

HMIPS will monitor the implementation of the action plan produced by the prison in response to the findings in this report through Independent Prison Monitors. We anticipate returning to Polmont to assess progress in healthcare in early 2020.

### **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 0131 244 8484.07939 980452.

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