

**Independent Prison Monitoring Bulletin****National Summary****April to June 2017**

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**Key Findings**

- **Purposeful Activity:** Purposeful activity is one of the areas most frequently monitored by IPMs who report positively about the range and level of activity available in many prisons in Scotland. During this quarter, IPMs highlighted some innovative activities with wider benefits for prisoners and the community. However IPMs continue to be concerned that particular groups of prisoners do not seem to access these opportunities, particularly where prisons are catering for multiple population groups.
- **Healthcare:** In IPM findings this quarter, the issue of healthcare staffing levels is one key theme, particularly in terms of filling key posts. An additional theme arising from prisoner requests to IPMs is that of access to mental health services. While in some prisons access to services appears to be appropriate, in others there are concerns particularly in terms of prisoners with less severe mental health problems. In addition, inconsistency in prescribing decisions between prisons, and between prisons and the community, continues to be of concern.
- **Transitions to the community:** The issue of preparation for release has been a common theme in IPMs' reports this quarter. However there does appear to be variation across Scotland in how prisoners experience this process. In some prisons innovative initiatives and strong community links are evident. In others IPMs report concern around basic needs such as accommodation and access to benefits. This includes specific concern about the process for accessing Universal Credit.
- **Progression:** IPMs continue to identify issues around progression, specifically access to programmes to support rehabilitation. In some prisons there have been clear efforts to maximise programme places. However, the problem of long waiting lists for access to programme places remains, meaning that some prisoners do not progress through their rehabilitation at the optimum pace. The matter of population management across the prison estate appears also to influence this issue.

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**Updates and Actions**

- **Population Management:** There continues to be consideration of this issue at a national level, by SPS and the Scottish Government. Ensuring best use of the prison estate would contribute positively to a number of issues of concern to IPMs, including access to purposeful activity and progression. HMIPS looks forward to hearing further updates on this issue from SPS and the Scottish Government.
- **Healthcare:** HMIPS welcomes the Scottish Government's establishment of a new joint collaborative health and justice board, following on from the Scottish Parliament Health and Sport Committee's inquiry into prisoner healthcare. It is hoped that joint leadership and focus will lead to improvements in the healthcare issues noted by IPMs.
- **Progression:** Ongoing discussions about population management may enable better programme availability. There are clear local efforts to maximise places available. In addition the new initiative at HMP Open Estate to improve the transfer arrangements to open conditions may also support improvements in this area, particularly in terms of prisoners' understanding.
- **Smoke-free prisons:** IPMs have noted interest and concern across the prison estate around the announcement that Scottish prisons will become smoke-free in 2018. A key focus for monitoring will be how prisoners are kept informed about this change and how access to smoking cessation services is managed.