

**Independent Prison Monitoring Bulletin****National Summary****October to December 2016****124 Independent
Prison Monitors****242 Prison
Monitoring Visits****305 Prisoner
Requests****Key Findings**

- **Healthcare:** In common with previous quarters, healthcare is the issue prisoners are most likely to raise with Independent Prison Monitors. While there is some variation from prison to prison in terms of the range of specific issues raised, and the level of requests, the focus of IPM conclusions is increasingly on communication and prisoners' experience of their care. A question for the IPM team at HMIPS is whether the SPS and healthcare systems and processes are adequate around communicating with prisoners and supporting them to ask questions about their care.
- **Progression:** Another consistent theme arising from prisoners' requests to see IPMs is that of progression. While IPMs find that critical dates are met around prisoners moving through their sentences, they often note long waiting times and limited availability for places on programmes to support progression; prisoners often report feeling that their progress towards release is hindered.
- **Purposeful Activity:** This is a key focus of observation by IPMs and is often also highlighted through prisoner requests. Provision of opportunities is variable across the estate, and is sometimes affected by the physical environment in older establishments. Similarly, IPMs note that uptake varies and some groups in some prisons appear to have more limited access to purposeful activity. Staff sickness can have a disproportionate effect on availability of purposeful activity spaces if it occurs within activities areas. However, IPMs note a clear focus on improving provision, and a number of very positive approaches at a local level around increasing uptake and engagement.
- **Staff Attitudes and Relationships:** IPMs consistently observe the beneficial impact of proactive, positive and courteous attitudes and behaviour from staff and the difference this makes for prisoners. This is particularly the case in terms of potentially difficult elements of prison life that IPMs observe, such as the reception process, visits, searches and transfers.

Updates and Actions

- **Healthcare:** There is a focus on improving prisoner healthcare at a national level, evident from activity across the Scottish Government and from the new inquiry into prison healthcare announced by the Scottish Parliament's Health and Sport Committee.
Progression and Purposeful Activity: It is noted that there is ongoing work by both the Scottish Government and the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) around planning for the changing prison population and ensuring best possible use of current resource. This should support improvements around both progression and purposeful activity.
- **Staff Attitudes and Relationships:** The IPM Team at HMIPS looks forward to hearing more about how SPS plans around development and professionalisation of prison officers can build on the positive approach already evident in many prisons.