



## HMIPS

HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland  
INSPECTING AND MONITORING

### HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland Statement

#### Report on an Expert Review of the Provision of Mental Health Services, for Young People Entering and In Custody at HMP YOI Polmont

This report was instigated in accordance with section 7(2)(d) of the Prisons (Scotland) Act 1989. The Cabinet Secretary for Justice, Humza Yousaf MSP wrote to HMIPS on 23 November 2018 and said:

*'Following the recent deaths of Katie Allan and William Lindsay (Brown) at HMP YOI Polmont, I refer the provision of mental health services for young people entering and in custody at Polmont to you for investigation.'*

*I would expect the review to look at the arrangements that exist within Polmont and at the information that is available when a young person is entering custody to inform the reception and management of that young person.*

*Given the focus of this review is on mental health provision I would wish the consideration of the provision of mental health services to be led by a healthcare professional with relevant experience but with full input from the Inspectorate and other agencies, as appropriate.'*

Firstly, HMIPS would like to offer our sincere condolences to the family of Katie Allan and William Lindsay (Brown), whose deaths gave rise to this expert review.

It is important to note that this review explored the wider issues of young people entering custody; we were not asked to consider the specific circumstances or details of individual cases.

When considering the methodology, we were clear from the outset that a key focus of our review should be to draw directly on the views and lived experiences of staff (both NHS and SPS), young people and their families. We completed a number of informative focus groups and one to one interviews. In addition, we undertook a mapping exercise of current reviews, policy and legislation and commissioned a comprehensive evidence review, completed by the Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research. We established working groups involving subject matter experts across the Justice landscape looking at information sharing, health and wellbeing and a review of two key processes in the SPS; suicide and self-harm prevention and the audit and learning review following a death in custody.

What has become clear in the evidence review and accompanying academic research is that being traumatised, being young, being held on remand and being in the first three months of custody increases the risk of suicide.

Two high level strategic issues merit specific attention:

- The lack of proactive attention to the needs, risks and vulnerabilities of those on remand and in early days of custody.
- The systemic interagency shortcomings of communication and information exchange across justice, that inhibits the management and care of young people entering and leaving HMP YOI Polmont.

The review's seven key recommendations are:

1. Social isolation, as a key trigger for self-harm and suicide, should be minimised, with a particular focus on those held on remand and during the early weeks in custody.
2. To support more effective risk management, the Scottish Government and other agencies should work together to improve the sharing and transmission of information for young people entering and leaving custody.
3. A bespoke suicide and self-harm strategy should be developed by the Scottish Prison Service and NHS Forth Valley for young people that builds on the strengths of the existing framework.
4. NHS Forth Valley should develop a more strategic and systematic approach to prison healthcare, with accompanying workforce capacity review and improved adolescent and young people specific training.
5. An enhanced approach should be developed, by the Scottish Prison Service, for the Talk to Me Strategy (TTM) suicide prevention work, with more intensive multi-disciplinary training and a more gradual phased removal for those placed on TTM.
6. Enhanced and more consistent Death in Prison Learning Audit and Review processes, by the Scottish Prison Service, are required to maximise learning from previous incidents.
7. Further work should be undertaken by the Scottish Government to provide a central coordination point for government reviews, use the existing analytical expertise to analyse comparative performance on suicides, and consider how the justice system can better respond to international evidence about maturation and alternative models of secure care.

Many of our conclusions build on recommendations made previously to the Scottish Government, the SPS and its partner agencies. For some issues, like the capacity to share information electronically between agencies, previous work may have been initiated, but ambitions are not yet fully realised. Other recommendations seek to offer fresh perspectives on longstanding challenges that face the many dedicated, caring, and compassionate individuals in the NHS, SPS, and partner agencies who work so hard to help our young people, some with the most complex mental health needs, levels of distress and challenging behaviours.

The Scottish Government is taking forward an ambitious penal reform programme that includes increasing the use of community sentences and reducing the use of short-term sentences and remand. HMIPS welcome this initiative, but to support progress in penal reform, Scotland will need to make further strategic and cultural shifts. These include maximising support for those held on remand, information sharing to inform the management of young people, and recognising the growing evidence about maturation.

Like the introduction of Whole Systems Approach to young offending and accompanying initiatives, the upfront investment of additional resources to address the identified challenges may yield significant benefits downstream.

## NOTES

1. HM CHIEF INSPECTOR OF PRISONS – WENDY SINCLAIR-GIEBEN was appointed to the post of HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland in July 2018.
2. Dr Helen Smith, Consultant Forensic Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, led the clinical and wellbeing review.
3. On publication the report can be found at [www.prisonsinspectoratescotland.gov.uk](http://www.prisonsinspectoratescotland.gov.uk)
4. 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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