



Independent Prison Monitoring (IPM) Findings Annual Report

Prison:
HMP ADDIEWELL

Year (1 April – 31 March):
2025 – 2026



Annual Monitoring Figures

		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
	Total number of visits:	70	82	114
	Total number of missed weeks:	0	4	2
	Total number of prisoner requests received:	341	255	274
	Total number of IPM hours:	257	341	476

Executive Summary

This Annual Monitoring Report presents the findings of Independent Prison Monitoring (IPM) at HMP Addiewell over the reporting year. Evidence is drawn from regular monitoring visits, engagement with prisoners and staff, attendance at forums and management meetings, and consideration of prisoner requests received by the IPMs. IPMs again increased the number of visits undertaken compared with previous years and had a comparable increase in the time spent in the prison, averaging more than two visits each week, providing ongoing and consistent scrutiny of the prison.

Overall, monitoring during the year found a generally positive and improving picture, with several areas continuing to do well alongside a small number of persistent operational concerns. The prison was consistently observed to be calm and well-ordered during the latter part of the year, with staff–prisoner relationships largely respectful and professional. Senior management engagement with IPMs was regular and constructive, and issues raised were generally acknowledged and dealt with.

Reception and induction processes remained a notable strength, with prisoners treated courteously, information provided clearly, and peer-led induction continuing to support new arrivals effectively. Induction was consistently observed to be respectful, informative, and accessible. Forums were well established and increasingly used for discussion, transparency, and problem-solving.

Purposeful activity continued to be an area of strength, particularly in education, creative programmes, faith provision, and the Academy. IPMs observed high levels of engagement and motivation among prisoners attending these activities, and the Prison Education Project, music provision, and recognition events were viewed particularly positively by both prisoners and staff. However, monitoring also showed that a significant number of prisoners remained unlocked without meaningful engagement for parts of the day, which IPMs continued to view as being detrimental to safety, staff workload, and prisoner mental health. Prisoners themselves have asked for a review of the regime to allow for some downtime during the day.

Earlier in the year, IPMs identified concerns relating to drugs, self-harm and lack of safety on some halls, but these issues improved over time through management action. Later monitoring showed calmer and more stable halls with improved oversight. IPMs judge safety at Addiewell to have improved over the year, albeit with some difficult periods. Data shared with IPMs showed downward trends in violence, drug use and self-harm across the two-year period. The newly launched Zero Harm Initiative Unit was seen positively, with IPMs noting improved culture, engagement, and stability among participating prisoners.

Decency standards were generally met, with improvements observed in cleanliness, mattress provision, and accommodation conditions. However, recurring issues persisted throughout the year in relation to pantry supervision, food distribution, shortages, and temperature control, despite management action and some evidence of improvement. Laundry and kit provision was a problem intermittently on some halls. IPMs noted increasing pressure on prisoners' ability to meet basic

personal needs through the prison canteen. Across the year, prisoners raised concerns about the affordability of canteen items, particularly against the backdrop of rising living costs more generally. This was compounded by the fact that prisoner earnings and weekly canteen spend limits have remained unchanged for a long time. While canteen provision itself was not deficient, IPMs considered that affordability was even more of an issue for prisoners than previously and one which has implications for perceptions of decency and fairness within prisons nationally.

Healthcare access and communication were among the most frequently raised concerns earlier in the reporting period, particularly regarding medication, appointments, and NHS complaint handling. Monitoring evidence showed gradual improvement over time, with fewer requests and more stable provision later in the year, although some issues remained unresolved, particularly around prescribing decisions and access to specialist services.

Transitions from custody and progression towards release continued to be a source of frustration for prisoners, largely linked to national issues around programme availability rather than prison-specific failings. Staff were observed to engage seriously with individual release planning and risk management, but many prisoners reported uncertainty and delayed access to required programmes, due to a national shortage of these and extended waiting lists.

In conclusion, IPMs reported on a prison that maintained stability, demonstrated openness to scrutiny, and showed improvement in several key areas, while continuing to face challenges around regime constraints and national issues. Wider overcrowding and population pressures are outwith the prisons control, and the shortage of offender behaviour programmes is a national problem. The prison staff and management team have made continued progress over the year, building on the improvements reported in our last annual report.

General Observations

Standard 1: Lawful and Transparent Custody

Reception and induction at Addiewell remained consistently strong. Prisoners were treated respectfully on arrival, procedures were clearly explained, and peer-led induction was well regarded.

Across the reporting year, the IPM team repeatedly observed reception and induction processes that were calm, courteous, and well organised. Prisoners arriving from court or transfer described being treated respectfully, with procedures explained clearly and staff and peer tutors taking time to answer questions. Peer-led induction sessions were consistently observed as informative and supportive, with prisoners encouraged to engage in education and activities early in their sentence.

Reception areas were generally clean and orderly, although the Insiders' Room was at times observed to be less welcoming than the prison would wish. Action was taken swiftly to resolve this when reported. Prison rules were provided in accessible formats.

Challenges remained for the prison in terms of the population held, and the number of prisoners on protection due to their offence. The prison had taken steps to manage this population more effectively, including the development of offence-neutral protection arrangements, which has supported more timely access to appropriate accommodation and a fuller regime for affected prisoners. Whilst moves to allocate further halls to this group helped, the increasing offence protection population across the SPS estate represents an ongoing challenge. Whilst the prison itself is not overcrowded, they are housing more men this year than last and a more complex group of men.

Overall, there were strong practices in reception and induction, mitigating some of the challenges around population management.

Standard 2: Decency

Living conditions were generally good and improved over the reporting year, but persistent issues remained around pantry supervision, food distribution and occasional food shortages. Cleanliness and accommodation standards improved, though laundry and kit issues recurred.

Throughout the reporting year, IPMs observed clean and well maintained accommodation, with noticeable improvements following deep-cleaning initiatives and revised mattress distribution systems. This continued the improvements noted in the previous two annual reports. Cells typically contained expected items, and damaged mattresses were increasingly replaced more promptly as systems matured. There was no overcrowding, with single cells holding only one prisoner, and the accommodation itself is what one would expect for the male prison estate in the 21st century, with a shower and an in cell kiosk system in every cell. Due to prison population pressures more double cell accommodation was being used and nearly 50 more places were being used on a daily basis than under the original contract, and this was soon to increase to the full capacity of 796 prisoners.

Food provision remained the most persistent area of concern under this standard. Across multiple months, IPMs observed and received reports of inconsistent portion control, missing items, food running short, broken equipment, and failures to conduct or record temperature checks. While improvements were noted during the latter part of the year, including strengthened supervision of serveries and the establishment of a food committee involving prisoner representatives, issues related to food provision were not fully resolved. Earlier concerns around portion control and

consistency had contributed to frustration among prisoners. The actions taken appear to have improved confidence, although this remained an area requiring continued attention.

IPMs noted growing concerns from prisoners regarding the affordability of items available through the prison canteen. Across the reporting year, prisoners increasingly described difficulty meeting basic needs within their available financial means. This was observed in the context of wider increases in the cost of living, alongside prisoner wage rates and weekly canteen spend limits which have remained unchanged for years. This issue has been raised consistently across multiple establishments over several years, with no resolution. IPMs consider that this issue contributes to pressure on decency standards, particularly for prisoners with limited, or no, external financial support.

Laundry and kit provision issues recurred intermittently, particularly on specific halls, with shortages of bedding, servery whites, and cleaning materials noted on occasions. These issues were usually acknowledged by management and addressed, but their recurrence suggests fragility in systems.

Standard 3: Personal Safety

Monitoring evidence indicates that personal safety at Addiewell has improved both over the reporting year and compared with previous years. Prisoners previously reported concerns relating to drugs, intimidation, and perceptions of a lack of safety on some halls, but these reports reduced over the reporting period, continuing the improvements seen over the last two years. Later visits consistently observed calmer environments and improved stability.

The Zero Harm Initiative Unit was repeatedly observed by IPMs as a positive development, with prisoners and staff reporting improved culture, reduced violence, and greater engagement.

IPMs regularly observed calm environments, lower tension levels, and well-chaired Prisoner of Concern and Safety Intervention Meetings, with strong senior management involvement and detailed oversight of vulnerable individuals. Staff demonstrated good knowledge of individual prisoners and their duty of care in decision-making. This was in part achieved by improving the consistency of staff deployed to halls.

Data shared with IPMs indicated a sustained downward trend in violent incidents, self-harm and drug use across a two-year period, supporting the IPMs' observations of improved safety, although short-term spikes linked to visits or drug ingress were acknowledged.

As reported last year, prisoners continued to raise concerns about the implementation of the regime and the impact this can have on their feelings of safety, as noted under Standard 5. Multiple prisoners have suggested short periods of respite and decompression would create a calmer prison. Monitoring evidence suggested that the current regime arrangements did not consistently support a calm and stable environment for all prisoners.

IPMs were saddened by the death in custody during the reporting year and extend their sympathy to all those affected. Overall, safety arrangements improved over the year, but continued vigilance is required.

Standard 4: Effective, Courteous and Humane Use of Authority

Authority was generally exercised appropriately, with particularly strong practice observed in the Care and Supervision Unit (CSU). Some ongoing concerns were noted regarding searching practices and clarity around property decisions, and there were at times failures to ensure prisoners on rules were afforded their time in fresh air.

IPMs consistently observed staff exercising authority in a skilled, measured, and humane manner. Interactions between staff and prisoners were generally calm and respectful, including in areas where authority is most acutely exercised, such as the CSU. Staff acted transparently, with

records appropriately maintained and prisoners able to understand the basis for decisions affecting them.

Property management showed some improvement over the year, including better organisation and clearer systems. However, prisoners continued to report loss of property following hall moves and confusion where approved items were not available through authorised purchasing routes. Searching practices, particularly the combination of body scanners and strip searching, continued to draw concern from IPMs.

Standard 5: Respect, Autonomy and Protection Against Mistreatment

Staff–prisoner relationships were generally respectful, with forums becoming an increasingly effective platform for engagement.

Monitoring found generally positive and respectful relationships between staff and prisoners. IPMs regularly observed courteous interactions, particularly on halls with stable staffing and in specialist units such as the CSU, and in non-residential functions. Officers in those areas were frequently seen to engage constructively with prisoners, explaining decisions and managing issues informally where appropriate.

Prisoner forums continued to grow as a significant strength over the reporting year. Forums were held regularly, well attended by staff and external partners, and increasingly used to address operational issues such as food provision, healthcare communication, and issues around visits. Discussions were constructive and follow-up actions taken, contributing to improved clarity and trust. Initiatives such as kitchen tours for forum representatives were viewed as particularly effective in building understanding and reducing tension.

Across most of the reporting year, prisoners reported uncertainty about who they could get key information from, reflecting the absence of a personal officer scheme. The scheme was reintroduced toward the end of the reporting year, with early indications suggesting improved support for prisoners. IPMs will monitor the implementation and embedding of the scheme during the coming year.

Complaints handling remained a concern. We had hoped to be able to report positively on the introduction of an online complaints system for prisoners, but while the prison has worked to bring this to fruition, it has been slower than anticipated.

The regime continued to be a source of frustration, with many prisoners unlocked for long periods without meaningful engagement, which IPMs considered undermined safety and contributed to tension. Prisoners themselves have asked for a period during the day to allow for decompression and to allow them time to themselves. More could also be done to normalise time of unlock on the halls. IPMs remain of the view that some regime-related concerns identified over successive years would benefit from greater flexibility within the contractual arrangements governing the prison. Things change in 25 years and the world the contract started in is not the one it operates now. For those prisoners who do access activities the provision is very good, and the atmosphere and relationships observed in these areas is the best in the prison. The work undertaken to improve the music room and the offering there is an example of what it is possible for staff to provide.

Standard 6: Purposeful Activity

Purposeful activity provision was a significant strength, particularly in education, creative programmes, and faith activity.

Purposeful activity at Addiewell remained a strong feature throughout the reporting year. IPMs observed only positive engagement in education, the Academy, creative programmes, faith provision, the gym, and specialist initiatives such as the Prison Education Project. Prisoners frequently expressed pride in their work and appreciation for opportunities that supported skills development, mental health, and family connection.

Facilities such as the music suite, library, and gym were observed to be well used and valued by prisoners. Investment in equipment and refurbishment during the latter part of the year indicated continued organisational commitment to activity provision.

Access to activity was uneven earlier in the year. IPMs observed that some workshops and classes were cancelled due to staffing pressures, and both staff and prisoners noted frustration when prisoners signed up for activities but did not attend, preventing others from accessing limited spaces. The difficulties in managing a full unlock, offering meaningful activity, and keeping different populations separate creates a real challenge in delivering a decent regime. With the increasing number of offence protection prisoners across the estate, the SPS may wish to review how different prisoner populations are housed across the entire estate, so prisons such as Addiewell are not trying to do all things for all people.

Prisoners on Rule 95 repeatedly alleged they did not receive daily access to fresh air, an issue IPMs could not always verify but noted as recurring. Prison management took these concerns seriously and whenever raised took immediate action.

Visits provision was observed to be positive, with visitors generally reporting that they were treated respectfully by staff. Over the course of the year, the prison developed its offer for families, including partnership work with external organisations to deliver initiatives such as themed visits, family-focused activities, and improved support for children. Enhancements to the environment, including the availability of refreshments, contributed to a more welcoming experience. While some concerns remained regarding the timing of visits, particularly for those reliant on public transport, the overall direction was better, and this area has shown significant improvement over the reporting year as well as when compared with previous annual reports.

Standard 7: Transitions from Custody into the Community

Staff engagement around individual release planning was evident, but systemic delays in programme access, caused by a lack of capacity at a national level, continued to frustrate and affect prisoners.

Evidence showed that staff engaged seriously with individual prisoners' release planning, including through Person of Concern meetings and liaison with external agencies. IPMs observed thorough discussion of complex cases, with attention paid to risk management, housing, and continuity of care.

However, prisoners continued to report frustration regarding access to programmes required for progression, particularly the Self-Change Programme. Many perceived that progression opportunities were limited and felt this was a failure of the prison. However, these challenges reflected national availability rather than local failings, where there is a lack of programme capacity and long waiting lists across the whole estate.

Positive resettlement work was observed, including engagement with Upside and other external partners. Prisoners nearing release reported receiving practical support, while long-term prisoners described feeling prepared for moves to less secure conditions. IPMs also observed positive work around employability, including job fairs, and were aware of several prisoners successfully going into jobs on liberation.

Overall, this is another area of the prison where performance, in the opinion of the IPMs, has improved compared with previous years.

Standard 8: Organisational Effectiveness

Leadership engagement and internal governance were generally strong, though staffing stability and visibility remained variable.

Organisationally, monitoring evidence found things to be generally effective. IPMs observed strong senior management attendance at governance meetings and respectful engagement with staff and

external partners. Meetings such as the Safety Intervention and Prisoner of Concern meetings were well structured, with accurate data and clear accountability.

Staff reported improved support and morale, particularly on halls with consistent staffing. However, frequent cross-deployment continued to be reported as disruptive by both staff and prisoners, affecting continuity, relationships and the solving of problems.

External agencies and third sector organisations providing services in the prison reported that they felt supported by the prison and had clear and aligned objectives. This was a view supported by the IPMs' own experiences, particularly in the second half of the year, where issues they raised were taken seriously and responded to quickly. Prison managers have been proactive and open in their engagement with the IPMs, allowing positive progress. Action was taken by the prison following reports from IPMs, or managers paid attention to areas or asked questions based on IPM feedback. This reflected effective engagement between the prison and IPMs, where monitoring activity contributed to timely action and continuous improvement.

Again, this is an area of ongoing and sustained improvement.

Standard 9: Health and Wellbeing

Healthcare access issues were prominent earlier in the year but improved, although communication and prescribing concerns persisted for some prisoners.

Health and wellbeing featured prominently in areas prisoners brought to the attention of IPMs, particularly during the first half of the reporting year when prisoners frequently raised concerns about access to primary care, prescribing decisions, and lack of a response to complaints. Nearly one quarter of all requests from prisoners to see an IPM at Addiewell related to issues around healthcare. IPMs noted significant dissatisfaction among prisoners on certain halls and ongoing confusion regarding NHS complaints processes.

The healthcare team took a proactive approach and things showed signs of improvement later in the year. Requests relating to healthcare reduced, staffing appeared more stable, and GP access was reported as more consistent. NHS engagement in prisoner forums improved transparency around prescribing practices, and efforts were made to improve communication about medication changes. As in the community, this should be done by the person making the change and explained in person to the patient.

Prisoners continued to report delays in specialist services such as optometry and frustrations about medications, particularly those which lead to dependency, being discontinued without adequate explanation or support.

In particular, and at a national level, remand prisoners need to be able to access routine dental and optometry support given the length of time many now spend on remand. Challenges around accessing patient records for prisoners transferring from other health boards were highlighted by healthcare staff as a risk factor. This reflected wider system challenges beyond the direct control of the establishment or local NHS board.

Overall, this was an aspect of prison life that improved during the year with an increased focus from the NHS board, and resources provided by them. Staffing challenges remained.