

Independent Prison Monitoring Recruitment Information Pack

A guide for prospective Independent Prison Monitors outlining the role, responsibilities, locations, time commitment, benefits, and how to apply.

Make a Difference as an Independent Prison Monitor

Could you help ensure that prisoners' human rights are upheld and that life in prison contributes to rehabilitation?

Becoming an Independent Prison Monitor (IPM) is a challenging and unusual volunteer role that offers a unique opportunity to see behind the scenes of Scotland's prison system. You will provide an independent perspective on the treatment and conditions of people in custody, observe and engage with prisoners, and report your findings to support fairness, transparency, and humane treatment.

IPMs carry a **legislative duty** to ensure prisons are monitored regularly, with every establishment visited at least once a week. Individually, you will usually visit your allocated prison at least once a month or more, with flexibility to fit around your personal circumstances.

This role allows you to work alongside people from diverse backgrounds, gain unique insights into the Scottish prison system, and be fully supported with training, one-to-one guidance from your Prison Monitoring Coordinator, and opportunities for further development.

Join our Independent Monitoring Teams and help make a real difference in the lives of prisoners and your local community.

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Are there any minimum requirements?

To apply to become an IPM the following minimum requirements must be met:

- You are at least 18 years old.
- You can commit to visit a prison at least once a month, more frequently where possible.
- You understand that there is mandatory training you must complete before you can begin monitoring.
- You understand that IPMs are expected to monitor for at least 2 years (up to a maximum of 9 years).
- You have been resident in the UK for the last 3 years.
- There are no restrictions on your residence in the UK.
- You are not on any anticoagulants (medication used to prevent and treat blood clots, i.e., “blood thinners”).
- You are physically able to undertake mandatory Personal Protection Training.
- You understand that this is an unpaid voluntary role (although expenses incurred as part of carrying out your duties, such as travel, will be reimbursed).

What is an Independent Prison Monitor (IPM)?

An Independent Prison Monitor (IPM) is a volunteer role within HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland (HMIPS) that carries statutory authority under the Public Services Reform (Inspection and Monitoring of Prisons) (Scotland) Order 2015. IPMs are publicly appointed to help ensure prisoners' human rights are upheld and that life in prison supports rehabilitation.

You will provide an independent viewpoint on the humane treatment and conditions for prisoners at your allocated prison, conduct investigations arising from prisoner concerns or your own observations, and report back on your findings.

We are looking for people from a wide range of backgrounds. The role requires excellent listening and observation skills, confidence in handling challenging situations, the ability to earn the respect of prisoners, staff, and Governors, and the confidence to engage with authority, when necessary, alongside a strong commitment to social justice.

Visits are flexible to fit your personal circumstances, including day, evening, weekend, and occasional night visits. All new IPMs receive training, one-to-one support from their Prison Monitoring Coordinator, team support from other monitors, and opportunities for ongoing development and professional growth.

Locations in Scotland

There are currently 17 prisons in Scotland. The country has been divided into four regions, shown in the table below, with a PMC assigned a region. The PMC supports and manages the IPMs in each establishment within their region.

Region 1	<u>HMP Castle Huntly</u> <u>HMP Glenochil</u> <u>HMP & YOI Grampian</u> <u>HMP Inverness</u> <u>HMP Perth</u>	Region 2	<u>HMP Barlinnie</u> <u>HMP Shotts</u> <u>HMP & YOI Stirling</u> <u>The Bella Centre</u> <u>The Liliac Centre</u>
Region 3	<u>HMP Dumfries</u> <u>HMP Greenock</u> <u>HMP Kilmarnock</u> <u>HMP Low Moss</u>	Region 4	<u>HMP Addiewell</u> <u>HMP Edinburgh</u> <u>HMP & YOI Polmont</u>

What would you be doing?

Monitoring the humane treatment of prisoners and conditions in prisons:

- Plan and coordinate visits with the Monitoring Team.
- Observe and monitor all aspects of prison life, including conditions and support provided to prisoners.
- Speak with prisoners, visitors, prison officers, and other staff about treatment and conditions
- Monitor arrangements for temporary release.
- Develop constructive working relationships with prisoners, staff, and the Governor.

Conducting investigations either because of a prisoner raising an issue or from your own observations:

- Respond to requests from prisoners for confidential conversations.
- Support prisoners in raising concerns or making their views known, where requested.
- Gather and assess relevant information as needed. Review relevant prison records relating to prisoner treatment.
- Take appropriate action on issues or observations, with support from the Monitoring Team.
- Escalate issues to prison management when necessary.
- Exercise discretion and authority when intervention is required.

Reporting on your monitoring and investigations:

- Record and report observations and findings from visits and investigations.
- Maintain accurate records using the Case Management System (CMS) and use it efficiently as part of your role.
- Highlight examples of good practice and provide constructive feedback.
- Raise issues with the Governor and the Prison Monitoring Co-ordinator when necessary.
- Contribute to the Prison Monitoring Annual Report as requested.

What skills and qualities do you need to have?

You do not need any special qualifications or experience. We will provide the necessary training and support. We are looking for **highly reliable people** with the **time, energy, and enthusiasm** to make a difference and to help us to discharge our statutory responsibilities. You do need to be open-minded, a natural communicator and be able to exercise sound, objective judgement.

We require you to be IT competent, committed to diversity, equality, and understand human rights. Important skills, abilities and aptitudes include:



Curiosity

Proactively exploring and seeking to understand what's happening — looking, listening, asking questions, and reflecting, even in familiar environments.



Courage

Voicing opinions even against the majority view, challenging decisions when needed, standing your ground appropriately, asking questions without hesitation, and learning from mistakes.



Taking the initiative

Doing things without always having to be told, finding out what you need to know, being resourceful and resilient, and spotting and using opportunities to discover further evidence and data.



Interpersonal skills

Listening actively, understanding, and empathising with others, exercising appropriate sensitivity, managing conflict, building relationships, working well with others, taking people with you, problem solving and assertiveness.



Critical thinking

The ability to analyse information objectively, consider different perspectives, recognise power dynamics, and use evidence and reasoning to form balanced judgements.



Tenacity

Handling challenges, being self-motivated, building confidence, not dismissing things that may at first appear minor or irrelevant and escalating matters of concern.



Clear communication

Exchanging ideas, thoughts, opinions, knowledge, and data with people at all levels of authority so that messages are received and understood with clarity and purpose.



Attention to detail

Looking closely at all the data and evidence, identifying patterns, spotting evidential weaknesses and gaps, following those up appropriately, and being thorough and accurate.



Knowing when to seek help

Being aware of your own limitations, recognising when advice or support is needed, and asking for guidance to ensure decisions and actions are appropriate and effective.



Self-awareness

Understanding your own biases and assumptions, managing emotions, aligning behaviour with internal values, and understanding issues from multiple perspectives.

How much time will you be expected to give?

The time commitment for each IPM can vary and tends to range between 15 to 25 days per year, including attendance at training and relevant meetings. HMIPS need people who can reliably commit to this.

Initial training and specific mandatory courses are listed on our website. While we do our best to offer training at a range of dates and times, in an area close to you, some of the initial training is provided by the Scottish Prison Service and may only be available Monday to Friday, from 9 to 5. In addition, you may be offered training opportunities involving travel.

A prison visit usually takes between 3-5 hours. The day/time at which you visit the prison is flexible to fit in with your personal circumstances and you will be part of a rota system coordinated by the Prison Monitoring Coordinator. You may also respond with follow up actions as required by your visit and attend the prison at other times that are not part of the regular rota which can increase the number of days you will be committing to.

We understand that life can be complicated therefore we aim to be flexible with all volunteer IPMs. The volunteering commitment as an IPM is a period of two years and ongoing one to one support and performance evaluation will be provided by the Prison Monitoring Coordinators. We will work closely with you during a 'settling in' period to ensure that we are mutually satisfied that the role of IPM is one that you are suited to and feel comfortable in. We understand that it is not for everyone.

What's in it for you?

As an IPM, you will have the opportunity to develop a wide range of personal skills such as decision-making, inter-personal skills and team-working which can benefit your career prospects, existing career, and your employer.

Volunteering with HMIPS is a fantastic opportunity for personal and professional growth. By giving your time and skills you will make a positive contribution to people who are detained and ensuring that they are treated fairly and with respect. All of this whilst making a valuable contribution to your community and wider society in Scotland.

As an IPM you also have a unique opportunity of working in a prison otherwise closed to the public. We offer comprehensive training to ensure that those appointed gain the knowledge and understanding needed to carry out the role effectively.

Examples of that training are as follows:

- The role of the Independent Prison Monitor
- Human Rights and other relevant legislation
- Personal Protection Training
- Standards for Inspecting and Monitoring Prisons
- Monitoring Guidance
- Local Prison Induction Training
- Prisoner Complaints
- Professional Boundaries

This is also a chance for you to meet new people, a chance to widen your social network and to provide unique and invaluable support. Whilst IPMs can work on their own, there is the opportunity to work in pairs or in small groups. You will be given one to one support and be included in local and regional meetings of IPMs. We will of course reimburse all travel and subsistence as appropriate.

How do you apply to become an IPM and what are the timescales

Application is submitted online, see the [HMIPS website](#).

The appointment timescale for successful applicants will depend on:

- Swift completion and return of Disclosure Scotland forms
- Availability of the training
- Applicants' availability and flexibility to attend training