
Independent Prison Monitor Agreement Dress and Code of Conduct

Updated September 2026

We appreciate your commitment to HMIPS and the role of Independent Prison Monitor (IPM). We aim to make your volunteer experience rewarding, clear, and supported. This document outlines our commitments to you, what we expect from you, and the key principles and behaviours for conducting your duties effectively.

What We Expect from You

As an IPM, you agree to:

- Perform your role to the best of your ability, following the agreed role description and HMIPS policies.
- Attend your scheduled visits and meetings, giving as much notice as possible if unable to attend.
- Always maintain confidentiality and respect data protection principles.
- Return any HMIPS equipment when leaving your role and notify us promptly of any conflicts of interest, illness, injury, or medication (such as anticoagulants) that could affect your ability to volunteer. Aim to give at least 4 weeks' notice if you decide to step down from the role.
- Always Follow the HMIPS Code of Conduct

Dress Code

Every prison has a dress code, and Independent Prison Monitors (IPMs) are expected to comply fully to maintain a professional and respectful atmosphere. The dress code is designed to ensure safety, security, and decorum.

IPMs are encouraged to dress in a casual-professional manner. While there is no need for formal attire such as suits, clothing should be presentable and appropriate for a professional environment.

1. Avoid inappropriate attire:

- No revealing clothing, such as see-through garments, tank tops, or short skirts/dresses unless paired with leggings.
- Shorts must be at least mid-thigh to knee length.
- Avoid ripped or excessively damaged clothing.

2. **Prohibited items include:**

- Hats, scarves, clothing with **hoods** or head coverings (except for religious purposes). The only exception to this is a hood on a raincoat where it is necessary due to weather conditions; however, this may still need to be removed when instructed inside the establishment. Please note that umbrellas are also not allowed.
- Steel-toe boots, motorcycle shoes, or any other bulky footwear.
- Metal hair accessories, smartwatches, sunglasses, necklaces that are of sufficient length, strength or design to present a ligature risk.
- Any electrical items including anything with Bluetooth such as earphones or speakers.

3. **Clothing and accessories must not:**

- Display offensive words, symbols, or gestures.
- Mimic uniforms or resemble staff attire.
- Be overly tight, loose, short or attention-grabbing.
- Identify any partizan preferences such as political views, sports teams, etc.

4. **Identification:**

- Once appointed and issued with their HMIPS IPM ID, IPMs must carry it with them clearly displayed at all times when visiting an establishment.

By dressing appropriately, cooperating during searches, and adhering to these conduct guidelines, Independent Prison Monitors foster a respectful, safe, and productive environment during their visits.

If issues arise around dress or conduct during visits please inform a member of the HMIPS team immediately so we can provide you with appropriate support.

Searches

All visitors to a prison, including Independent Prison Monitors, are subject to security searches upon entry. These searches are essential for maintaining a safe and secure environment for prisoners, staff, and visitors.

1. **Types of Searches:**

- **Bag searches:** Any bags or items you bring into the prison will be thoroughly inspected.
- **Personal searches:** Visitors may undergo pat-down searches or be required to pass through a metal detector.

2. **Cooperate Fully:**

- Remain patient and cooperative with staff during the search process.
- Understand that these procedures are in place to ensure everyone's safety.

3. **Prohibited Items:**

- Do not attempt to bring contraband or unauthorized items into the prison. Even accidental violations can lead to delays or denial of entry. Please check with the prison on any items you are unsure about.

General Conduct

When visiting a prison as an IPM, your behaviour should reflect professionalism, respect, and integrity. Follow these key principles:

- **Do no harm:** Prisoners are particularly vulnerable and their safety should always be kept in mind by Independent Prison Monitors, who should not take any action or measure which could endanger an individual or a group. In particular, in cases of allegations of torture or ill-treatment, the principle of confidentiality, security and sensitivity should be kept in mind. This should be considered particularly where there is a perception of fear of reprisal.
- **Exercise good judgment:** Independent Prison Monitors should have an awareness of the HMIPS Standards and Prison Rules against which they are conducting their monitoring. However, whatever their number, relevance and precision, rules cannot substitute for good personal judgement and common sense. Independent Prison Monitors should therefore possess and exercise good judgment in all circumstances.
- **Respect staff and authorities:** Unless a minimum basis of mutual respect is established between the prison staff and the Independent Prison Monitors, the effectiveness of our work in prisons might be jeopardised. Independent Prison Monitors should always respect the functioning of the authorities and try to identify the hierarchic levels and their responsibilities so as to be able to address any problem at the right level.
- **Respect prisoners:** Whatever the reasons for imprisonment, prisoners must be treated with respect and courtesy. The Independent Prison Monitor should always introduce him or herself.
- **Be credible:** Independent Prison Monitors should explain clearly, to prisoners and prison staff, the objectives and the limitations of their monitoring work and behave accordingly. They should commit to any undertakings that they are unlikely or unable to keep, not take any action that they cannot follow through. The Independent Prison Monitors can support, advocate and where necessary investigate however cannot for example provide legal or medical advice to a person in prison regardless of their individual qualifications or expertise.
- **Maintain confidentiality:** Respect for the confidentiality of the information provided in private interviews is essential. Independent Prison Monitor should not make any representation using the name of a person in prison without his or her express and informed consent. If the issue is a medical matter written consent is required from the prisoner.

Independent Prison Monitor should make sure that the person in prison fully understands the benefits as well as the possible risks or negative consequences of any action taken on their behalf. Independent Prison Monitors, are bound to respect a prisoners confidentiality.

- **Respect security:** Security refers to the personal security of Independent Prison Monitor, the security of the prisoners who are in contact with them and the overall

security of the prison. Independent Prison Monitor are keyholders in the prison and must have completed local induction and key security prior to the uplift of any keys. If an Independent Prison Monitor is on the rota to perform a night visit, the prison must be informed in advance to ensure that the Independent Prison Monitor can be recognised and external doors be opened for them. In the event of a night visit the Independent Prison Monitor will not be allowed to access keys, or speak with any prisoner. They may accompany staff on a night patrol around the prison and monitor in the electronic control room (ECR).

It is important to respect the internal rules of the prison visited and to seek advice or request any special dispensation from those in charge. The prison authorities may invoke security reasons for not allowing an Independent Prison Monitor to specific places or put conditions on interviews with specific prisoners. This must be respected, however should be challenged for defensibility through the appropriate channels.

As with all visitors to a prison an Independent Prison Monitor should never introduce or remove any objects into or out of the prison without the prior agreement of the prison authorities, a breach of this rule could be a criminal offence. Independent Prison Monitors should show their identity by wearing an identification badge and this should be worn on an Independent Prison Monitoring lanyard.

Regarding the security of the prisoners visited, the Independent Prison Monitor should consider how to use information in such a way as not to put individuals at risk. Independent Prison Monitor should make repeat visits and meet again most of the prisoners seen previously to make sure they have not suffered reprisals..

- **Be consistent and persistent:** The legitimacy of the independent prison monitoring mechanism is established over time, mainly as a result of the relevance, persistence and consistency of its work. Monitoring prisons requires efficiency, regularity and continuity. It implies visiting regularly the same places and building up enough evidence to draw well founded conclusions and make recommendations. It is essential to be persistent also in the follow-up activities.
- **Be accurate:** During the on-site visit it is important to collect sound and precise information in order to be able to draft well documented reports to support relevant recommendations..
- **Be sensitive:** Particularly when interviewing prisoners, Independent Prison Monitor should be sensitive to the situation, mood and needs of the individual, as well as to the need to take the necessary steps to protect his or her security. In cases of allegations of torture and ill-treatment, Independent Prison Monitor should be aware of the problems of re-traumatization.
- **Be objective:** Independent Prison Monitor must strive to record actual facts, and to engage with the prison staff, any other relevant staff and prisoners in a manner that is not coloured by feelings or preconceived opinions.
- **Behave with integrity:** Independent Prison Monitor should treat all prisoners, prison authorities and staff, and their fellow Independent Prison Monitor with decency and respect. They should not be motivated by self-interest and should be scrupulously honest. In all their dealings they should operate in accordance with the international human rights standards that they are mandated to uphold. Any concerns should be raised through the appropriate escalation channels.

- **Be visible:** Within the prison, Independent Prison Monitor should make sure that prison staff, other relevant staff and prisoners are aware of the methodology and mandate of the independent prison monitoring scheme and that they know how to approach them.

Posters should be available on each prison landing notice board setting expectations. Outside the prison, the work of prison monitoring should be publicised through written reports from the HMIPS head office only. No contact should be made to the media or comments made on social media by any Independent Prison Monitor or collective group of Independent Prison Monitor regarding the work of independent prison monitoring or individual prisoners, Governors in Charge or any staff. This will result in instant removal from the role of Independent Prison Monitor and is considered a confidentiality breach and breach of this code.

- **Manage conflicts of interest:** In the event that there is, or there is potential, for a conflict of interest the Independent Prison Monitor must inform the regional PMC without delay to discuss and determine the nature of the conflict of interest to allow reasonable adjustments to be considered and implemented. Some examples of conflicts of interest are that an Independent Prison Monitor may know a prisoner in a specific prison, they may be associated with individuals out with the prison who know or are connected to the prison or a change of their employment to a justice or prison related role.