

PRISON	HMP YOI CORNTON VALE		YEAR (1 APRIL – 31 MARCH)	2022 – 3 March 2023	
Total number of visits	69	Total number of missed weeks	3	Total number of IPM hours	170.5
Total number of prisoner requests received	15	Number of IPMs in the team (as at 31 March)	6		

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an overview of key Independent Prison Monitor (IPM) observations over the 2022-2023 reporting year, noting that the prison did not house any one after 3 March 2022. The team performed well despite fewer than the optimal eight IPMs envisaged by HMIPS. The statutory duty of at least one visit per well fell short and three weeks were missed over the course of the year due to unforeseen circumstances. IPMs dealt with 15 requests received alongside general observations around the prison speaking with staff and those in their care, alongside three thematic areas of focused monitoring projects, all of which tied into areas of most significant concern:

- SPS establishments for women** – An HMP YOI Cornton Vale IPM visited each of the five Scottish prisons which housed females (undertaken prior to the two Women’s Community Custody Units (WCCUs) opening) which sought to understand any variances and commonalities for females in prison. There were obvious similarities, however equally clear differences in relation to access to work, education, activities, throughcare and progression, concluding that females in mainly adult male prisons seemed more disadvantaged.

SPS have made stepped progress towards delivery against the ‘Strategy for Women in Custody: 2021-2025’ following the opening of the WCCUs during 2022, and plans for the new national custodial facility and assessment centre for women, HMP YOI Stirling due to open by summer 2023. The independent evaluation of the WCCUs, which is underway, and HMP YOI Stirling in due course will be an early insight to the person-centre, gender, and trauma informed approach, and how the learning and best practice is shared and implemented across the wider SPS women’s estate, and longer term the male estate.
- Transportation/GEOAmey** – A review of the adequacy of prisoner transportation to identify areas of concern and potential immediate, short and long-term impacts aligning directly with Human Rights. IPMs identified a range of concerns concluded a) there may be a risk of discrimination between male and female prisoners as regards transit times, and b) health related human rights issues highlighted may suggest a need for more urgent consideration by HMIPS. Findings were escalated to HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland, who took immediate action escalating estate wide concerns of critical hospital appointment transport cancellations to the then Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans.

3. Mental health concerns – Focused IPM monitoring resulted in escalation of serious concerns regarding mental health and the availability of secure psychiatric beds. Such issues are not new. It is disturbing that despite many staff doing a remarkable job, particularly those involved in the management and care of the most vulnerable, the level of staff anxiety about what was happening was significant. HMIPS escalated concerns to relevant bodies, including Mental Welfare Commission Scotland (MWCS). Further, HMIPS escalated broader mental health concerns, writing to relevant bodies regarding delayed in-patient care transfers and managing the behaviours of those deemed not suitable for in-patient care having an impact on staff. A roundtable discussion is expected in 2023.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS	Overall RAG rating		
<p>Standard 1 – Lawful and transparent custody</p> <p>IPMs confirmed that Reception was well managed with clear, well organised, thorough, and effective procedures. Staff were knowledgeable and genuinely cared for those leaving and arriving answering any questions asked of them in a professional, friendly, and polite manner. Similarly, the induction process was well managed, robust, often taking a tailored approach to meet the individual needs of each person.</p>	☐	☐	✓
<p>Standard 2 - Decency</p> <p>Despite the reducing population, therefore reducing numbers working in essential work parties such as kitchen, laundry, and the cleaning party, IPMs reported that the houses, communal areas, and grounds were well maintained. Kitbags were cleaned daily, bedding weekly and quilts quarterly, and cleaning materials were available when needed. Generally, there was positive feedback about the meals.</p> <p>IPMs reported issues raised regarding the static canteen spend limit (£20) and wages, versus the cost-of-living crisis i.e. increasing cost of canteen items. Wages and canteen spend limits were set nationally therefore out with the control of prison management. The prison recognised many individuals were working in more than one work party and looked to ensure this was recognised in the wage paid and within the national limits.</p> <p>Toiletries were readily available and IPMs confirmed that on arrival all new admissions were offered a shower and provided with an overnight / hygiene pack. If needed, due to court to prison custody transfer duration, reception staff tried to ensure they could them offer something to eat.</p>	☐	☐	✓
<p>Standard 3 – Personal safety</p> <p>IPMs did not report any issues of concern and confirmed staff were vigilant and appeared to have a robust approach to recording interactions with those most vulnerable. Generally, things were calm and orderly. Staff managed incidents effectively and proportionately.</p>	☐	☐	✓

<p>Standard 4 – Effective, courteous, and humane use of authority</p> <p>IPMs confirmed that those held in the Separation and Reintegration Unit (SRU – Dumyat) had reintegration plans in place, and staff worked closely with healthcare and encouraged and supported social interaction and exercise. Where those held in SRU were from another prison there was regular and ongoing review with staff from the sending prison. IPMs escalated concerns regarding those who required to be accommodated in specific conditions following advice from a healthcare professional, reported more fully against Standard 9.</p> <p>Early in the year IPMs reported that, due to staff shortages, those in Peebles House experienced the grill gates been locked earlier than usual where staff were required to provide support in Ross House/Dumyat. IPMs reported this only happened occasionally and appeared to reduce as the year progressed. IPM confirmed staff checking personal belongings of women due to transfer were calm, orderly, and ensured there was a clear understanding of what was happening and why.</p>	□	✓	□
<p>Standard 5 – Respect, autonomy, and protection of mistreatment</p> <p>There was a good rapport between staff and those in their care and IPMs confirmed that staff were knowledgeable, supportive, and considered an individual’s needs and circumstances. Staff spoke positively, demonstrated compassion, and ensured confidentiality and privacy was respected by conducting sensitive conversations in an appropriate space. Individuals were comfortable speaking with staff. The user voice meetings were felt to be an open space to raise and often resolve any issues, make suggested changes to the canteen list and have a say in the activity and event plans. Such relationships contributed to the small number of complaints received by the prison, although there was a good understanding of the complaints process.</p>	□	□	✓
<p>Standard 6 – Purposeful activity</p> <p>The prison did well to manage work, activities and events given the challenges faced to due staff shortages resulting from COVID-19 related absences, and a declining overall population (with considerable proportion on remand) and to ensure essential work parties continued to operate. During periods of staff absence, staff resources had to prioritise essential work parties which occasionally impacted recreation, exercise, and/or gym activities. Some individuals required to work two or three work parties, however, were content with what was required and that the days passed quicker. IPMs confirmed a robust process to consider an individual’s suitability for different work parties.</p> <p>A range of activities and events ran throughout the year, from awareness days and Zumba to therapeutic dog visits and as “Knit Happens”, which provided a socialising opportunity and produced crafts such as premmie hats which benefitted the community. The Links Centre was a positive and supportive space which provided a range of learning opportunities, including Life Skills and computer training. IPMs were pleased that staff and peer mentors proactively encouraged and supported those most vulnerable to take part in activities.</p>	□	□	✓

<p>Standard 7 – Transition from Custody to the community</p> <p>The transition from custody to the community support available was appreciated by individuals. HMP YOI Cornton Vale was the only establishment for females which offered work placements before the two Women’s Community Custody Units opened. IPMs confirmed arrangements were in place for DWP to attend three days per week to support new admissions and those due to be liberated. DWP and the Link Centre officer worked in partnership to ensure all facets of benefits, housing, and healthcare were in place as far as possible. Employment support was also offered to those returning to work.</p> <p>Early in the year IPMs reported that support services, i.e. social work, experienced staff challenges due to COVID-19 however did stabilise and had improved. Towards the end of 2022 IPMs spoke with social work staff and discussed progressions issues. In general there were few constraints, but there was some evidence that the Parole Board were delaying release where they were not confident that social care would be available outside the prison. It is acknowledged that this was out with the control of the prison.</p>	□	□	✓
<p>Standard 8 – Organisational effectiveness</p> <p>IPMs confirmed that staff fully understood their roles, were trained, demonstrated commitment to the organisation and those that they cared for. There were some concerns in relation to the Senior Management Team capacity and support resulting from changing responsibilities associated with planning for the opening of the Women’s Community Custody Units and staff absence. This was managed as effectively as possible with the resources available. The new Governor started mid-January, providing some stability as the closure of the prison neared.</p> <p>The prison appeared effective in working with other parts of the prison service and wider justice system, notably the sending prison for those held in Dumyat who were from another prison, and Links Centre staff with external support services (i.e. DWP). Despite the monthly equality and diversity (E&D) meetings being cancelled or postponed, often last minute, for a considerable proportion of the year, in general E&D matters appeared to be well considered and attended, although often there was a lack of prisoner representation</p> <p>Through the second half of the reporting year there was increasing staff uncertainty related to the opening of the Women’s Community Custody Units, closure of HMP YOI Cornton Vale and opening of HMP YOI Stirling. At times resulting in low staff morale and consequently some anxiety for those in their care. This was a difficult period for all involved including prison management. Towards the latter part of the reporting year IPMs reported the uncertainty had eased, although aspects of uncertainty remained for some staff, IPMs reported this did not appear to impact those in their care.</p> <p>There was notable serious concern reported by regarding frequent admissions late in the evening and prisoners being in GEOAmeY transportation longer than necessary. GEOAmeY capacity and performance issues, across the SPS estate, included failure to attend which affected, most significantly, hospital cancellations. This was an ongoing national concern</p>	□	✓	□

<p>which had been escalated to the HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland, who escalated concerns to the SPS Chief Executive Officer and the Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary.</p>			
<p>Standard 9 – Health and wellbeing</p> <p>IPM had most serious concern for those who were mentally unwell and exhibiting severe mental health needs. The specialist nursing skills required to deal promptly and effectively were not available within the prison, however NHS and SPS front-line staff did all they could with resources available to support those with the most complex needs in a challenging environment. These challenges were compounded by assessment timescales and availability of secure psychiatric beds for females. IPMs escalated concerns to HMIPS, who further escalated concerns to the Mental Welfare Commission Scotland and the Scottish Government Prison Healthcare Team. Although the most serious of concerns had eased before the prison closed, such challenges were not new and were an ongoing concern.</p> <p>Staff said a high proportion of those accommodated in Ross House (and Dumyat) were vulnerable due to addictions, trauma, learning difficulties, and mental health issues. SRU staff confirmed to IPMs they were training in mental health first aid, although questioned this was sufficient for those with the most acute needs. IPMs confirmed that staff engaged well and SPS staff were supported by specialist healthcare professionals. This included a daily ‘rapid run down’ which was a collaborative approach.</p> <p>IPMs reported a positive holistic approach with good access to healthcare, which was often felt to be better than that in the community. Both SPS and NHS staff spoke highly of the daily ‘rapid run down’ approach adopted with Ross House/Dumyat which, in addition to an in-depth needs assessment and healthcare service. However, those on remand often had limited access to some health services, such as the optician and dentist, although access was always arranged for emergency care/treatment.</p>	□	✓	□
<p>RAG (Red, Amber, Green) status key: Some serious concerns Some slight concerns No concerns / good practice</p>			
<p><i>RAG rating: where IPMs felt each standard would be rated given their experience - not a complete analysis but based on their judgement.</i></p>			

KEY ISSUES	
1.	Closure and transition plans.
2.	Mental health needs, support, and wider secure mental healthcare provision out with the prison.
3.	Transportation.

ENCOURAGING OBSERVATIONS

Through the challenging times of uncertainty due to the delayed opening of HMP YOI Stirling, for both the women and staff, positive relationships were maintained. The women felt listened to and supported, and staff were knowledgeable, genuinely caring and engaged well.

The holistic healthcare approach taken, supported by the collaborative daily 'rapid run down' given the mental health challenges, the NHS and SPS were supporting each other to do their best for all the women and importantly those with the most acute needs.

The SPS Women's Strategy Team (WST) delivered a presentation to the IPM Team, and IPMs from across Scotland who monitored in establishments which housed women. IPMs were encouraged to hear that the new prison will provide a more supportive environment. SPS staff who delivered the presentation and will work in the WCCUs or new prison once they opened said they were *"very passionate about the work we are involved in at the moment and are motivated to ensure that we do indeed make a difference. Small steps at first but we are already seeing small changes"*.

CONCLUSION

This was a tricky year for the prison due to SPS staff challenges and the capacity of a reducing population to ensure essential work parties continued to operate. This was in addition to preparing for change and the closure of the prison. The thematic work undertaken by IPMs, related to the wider women's estate, transportation/GEOAmev and mental health concerns drew out areas of serious concern. Although aspects of the serious concerns were out with the control of prison management there was absolutely no question that all staff were doing all they could to care and support the women, especially those with the most acute needs.