



HMIPS
HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland
INSPECTING AND MONITORING

NEWS RELEASE
INSPECTION OF HMP & YOI GRAMPIAN

HMP & YOI Grampian is a modern establishment with some of the best prison accommodation in Scotland. Following an occurrence of serious disorder in its early months, male young offenders were relocated and the accommodation they occupied, Cruden Hall, was closed. It was disappointing that some of the highest quality of prison estate in Scotland was lying empty at the time of our inspection, although they have now started to reopen part of it to deal with the current overcrowding crisis across the prison estate.

HMP & YOI Grampian suffered from the same malaise as several other Scottish prisons, an impoverished regime, with almost 40% of the population in our pre-inspection survey claiming that they had less than two hours out of cell each day. In addition, the regime could be restricted further due to staff shortages. The pressure on regime provision was exacerbated by the critical balance of experience versus inexperience as well as the potential for staff redeployment due to the shortcomings of the prisoner transport service operated by GEOAmev.

When this inspection took place, HMP & YOI Grampian was one of seven SPS establishments assessed as the highest status regarding risk associated with overpopulation and other issues such as staffing vacancies and absence level.

However, there were a number of areas where HMP & YOI Grampian shone. Excellent work was being done by the Outreach Team, creating bespoke intervention plans to support any individual referred to their services. This was an invaluable resource in forming effective, person-centred relationships with vulnerable prisoners. This extended out into the community, where Outreach staff had supported individuals' attendance at court and accompanied a vulnerable individual being liberated into the care of their guardian.

The Case Management Board process for short-term prisoners was facilitating strong multi-agency, person-centred partnership working in release planning and community reintegration. Other impressive developments included the older persons work party in partnership with the charity Stella's Voice, and the Care Assistance Programme, where a multi-agency team anticipated and planned for the care needs of prisoners who required extra help or specialist equipment. The Virtual Court release process also worked well and prisoners were impressed with the prison library and the sheer volume of activity undertaken by the Librarian. The spiritual needs of prisoners were well catered for by a proactive Chaplaincy Team.

Another highlight was the HMP & YOI Grampian Development Programme and associated staff mentoring arrangements. However, recruitment and retention of staff including NHS colleagues were long-standing and ongoing challenges for the prison, and this was compounded by the need to step in and undertake prisoner transport at times when the service provided by GEOAmev failed, often at short notice.

We also considered that the short “core day” regime operated by the prison should be reviewed alongside other aspects of the regime to ensure there is improved access for prisoners to activities, especially in the evening and for maximising time out of cell. Greater attention also needs to be given to reviewing the markers for prisoners who need to be kept separate and managing the risk of bullying within the prison.

In summary, this report identifies a number of areas of good practice that I hope will be taken up by other prisons in Scotland. It also highlights areas where improvements can be made, that will enhance the treatment and conditions for prisoners in HMP & YOI Grampian. A primary objective for the SPS must be achieving the staffing level necessary to reopen all of the unused high-quality accommodation in Cruden Hall. This would ease overcrowding pressures across the prison estate and reduce the need for prisoners to share cells designed for one person or sleep on mattresses on the floor, as regrettably happened earlier in the year.

Other key recommendations include applying the SPS Anti-Bullying Strategy consistently, ensuring that staff carry out comprehensive rub down searches, that accredited rehabilitation programme delivery resumes, and that patients can attend secondary care appointments. These should only ever be cancelled due to extraordinary, unforeseen circumstances.

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. Interim HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland, Stephen Sandham was appointed in August 2024.
2. On publication the report can be found at www.prisoninspectoratescotland.gov.uk
3. For further information please contact Kerry Love, at Kerry.Love@gov.scot or on 07939 980452.

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