



HMIPS
HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland
INSPECTING AND MONITORING

News Release
Full Inspection of HMP Inverness

HMP Inverness was a small Victorian prison and plans for a replacement prison were well advanced. Had this not to be the case, this report would more vociferously highlight concerns about the infrastructure of HMP Inverness. The current facility is ill-suited to the requirements of a modern prison system, not least regarding the lack of accessible cells. It is hoped that development of the new prison is not inhibited by the budgetary pressures facing the SPS, as any slippage with the construction of the replacement prison would be deeply troubling.

Staff/prisoner relationships were always friendly, respectful, and supportive. There was a strong management team and a strong staff group, with positive relationships between them and with their partner agencies.

The elements where good practice and determined efforts to promote a transformational agenda really stood out, included development of a new Recovery Wing, with a SMART recovery programme close to being embedded at the time of our inspection. It was also encouraging to see action had been taken to refurbish the holding cells and agree a protocol whereby anyone requiring to be held for longer than 72 hours would be transferred to a more appropriate Separation and Reintegration Unit setting.

Another clear strength was the collaborative working between partners on community reintegration planning. In particular, use of the new “my compass” outcome tracking tool should provide valuable feedback for individuals as well as for the prison and community partners on the effectiveness of the support provided.

We fully understand that local management will be focussed on planning for the new prison, but we nevertheless highlight a number of areas where improvements are needed to the existing prison and some modest additional investment is required to existing facilities. The lack of privacy afforded to prisoners being searched in reception must be addressed, alongside the inadequate privacy offered to those showering through saloon doors that do not close fully. In a similar vein there were not enough places in the Links Centre where confidential conversations could take place. Some cells being used as doubles were too small for double occupancy and breached international standards on minimum space dimensions.

Although we found the prison safe and our prisoner survey suggested most prisoners felt safe, the lack of cameras in residential areas was an impediment to maintaining safety and security.

The visits room was cold and uninviting. It is recognised that only limited investment on this is practical, but some further efforts to make the visit room more attractive, particularly to children, would be appropriate. In some ways more concerning was the lack of availability of evening visits, which was a major barrier to family contact. It was also disturbing to hear those prisoners arriving at the prison between 5:30 pm and 6:30 pm were having to wait inside a prison van until the staff break had finished. Staff shortages and a return to the core day were impacting on the ability to run a full regime, but we would still like to see more pace in the return to pre-pandemic norms.

The prison-based social work team was struggling with staffing shortages and changes in personnel; Highland Council and the SPS need to work together to ensure the team is better

supported. The Learning Centre provided a bright and welcoming environment for prisoners to engage in learning, but uptake was low, with a limited range of subjects. Stronger efforts are needed to engage new learners.

Prisoners were positive about access to healthcare staff and services, and inspectors found a committed NHS healthcare team keen to provide a good service. However, the healthcare team are strongly encouraged to develop more robust systems and processes that can support accountability and assurance around managing patient care, including long-term conditions, pharmacy provision, links to drug and alcohol services and infection control.

To ensure a smooth transition to HMP Highland we urge the SPS to recruit additional staff well ahead of the planned opening and provide opportunities for staff in HMP Inverness, who have only ever known an old Victorian prison, to gain experience of working in a modern prison on temporary detached duty to HMP Grampian.

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland, Wendy Sinclair-Gieben was appointed in July 2018.
2. On publication the report can be found at www.prisonssinspectoratescotland.gov.uk
3. For further information please contact Kerry Love, Business Manager, at Kerry.Love@gov.scot or on 07939 980452.

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