



HMIPS
HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland
INSPECTING AND MONITORING

News Release
Full Inspection of HMP Low Moss

The continued overcrowding in Scotland's prisons, far exceeding design capacity, remains an enduring crisis and is echoed in HMP Low Moss with the prison population exceeding its 2012 design capacity. The introduction of an additional 100 spaces, while providing much needed capacity for the overall estate, reduced the individual living space available for prisoners by creating double cellular accommodation out of designated single cell accommodation. These small double cells were particularly troubling during the COVID-19 pandemic when time out of cell was at a premium.

The pressures of the pandemic meant that significant numbers of prisoners were constrained to the minimum requirement of one hour's exercise in the open air with very little additional time out of cell. In addition, infection control protocols saw isolated prisoners having this basic right reduced to one hour out of cell in the fresh air every third day. We were pleased to see that the Governor addressed and resolved this human rights issue during the inspection.

The prison was also dealing with a more complex population than when first opened and despite having the additional 100 places, the prison was not allocated permanent additional staff resources. There is a clear need for a full capacity modelling exercise, with HMIPS expectation that additional staff will be needed not only in the SPS but also across the partner disciplines of the NHS and Fife College. The capacity modelling exercise also needs to address the challenges faced by the prison in releasing staff to attend training and maintain core competency compliance.

Staff prisoner relationships are key to a successful prison and the Inspectorate had conflicting perceptions of SPS staff. We observed and heard examples of good compassionate care and support for prisoners, for example on admission, and we also commend the support offered for vulnerable prisoners in Kelvin Two Bravo. However, prisoner perceptions of some staff were not always so positive. Conversely, the robust processes around managing staff absences and staff discipline, supported and underpinned by good relationships between the Governor and local trade unions, were notable and to be praised.

Relationships between the SPS and external agencies were generally very positive, but there is a need to embed the good management culture of mutual understanding and co-operation between the SPS and NHS to every level below the management, to ensure patient care is not compromised. An important point to note was the stability within prison- and community-based social work teams, giving a continuity of service and collaborative working approach between well-informed and experienced staff.

The prisoner transport performance was deeply troubling with significant evidence of late arrivals and missed hospital appointments. This was true across Scotland and was a serious concern that had been escalated by HMCIPS to SPS HQ. Since the inspection, improvements have been noted.

On healthcare there was evidence of a sustained improvement in, for example, the audit of record keeping and patient care plans. We welcomed the 'safe to start' approach that had been implemented across the three prisons by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde to maintain adequate staffing numbers, and ensure safe healthcare delivery. However, NHS GGC need to reintroduce clinical supervision as a priority within the Mental Health and Addiction Teams

to support staff with the sustained pressures experienced with both COVID-19 and staffing shortages.

In conclusion, the inspection undoubtedly highlighted a number of issues where improvement is necessary and where, with creative thinking, the limitations of the existing pandemic are not an insurmountable barrier to progress. However, the Governor and management team demonstrated their capability to provide strong operational leadership in testing times. The Inspectorate applauds their efforts to support and motivate staff and partners to work together to maintain prisoner safety and manage difficult situations as a cohesive team. HMIPS also commends those staff working in HMP Low Moss who evidenced their continued compassion for prisoners and determination to provide a caring and professional service in extremely challenging circumstances.

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.prisoninspectorscotland.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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