

Report on HMP Low Moss – Inspection 25 August to 29 August 2025

Short Summary of the Inspection Findings

About this inspection

- This report is from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland (HMIPS).
- Inspectors visited **25-29 August 2025**.
- We looked at how prisoners were treated and the conditions they lived in.

What inspectors found

There was a **mixed picture**. There were some good things, but also some serious concerns. We were most concerned about **overcrowding**, **staffing pressures**, and problems **helping prisoners progress towards release**.

No.	Standard	Rating
1	Lawful and Transparent Custody	 Satisfactory
2	Decency	 Generally Acceptable
3	Personal Safety	 Generally Acceptable
4	Human Use of Authority	 Satisfactory
5	Respect and Protection	 Generally Acceptable
6	Purposeful Activity	 Generally Acceptable
7	Transition to Community	 Poor
8	Organisational Effectiveness	 Satisfactory
9	Health and Wellbeing	 Satisfactory

Good things seen

- **Good reception and admission process**
 - New arrivals were treated well.
 - Peer supporters helped new prisoners settle in
- **Clean and well-maintained residential areas**
- **Good support for families**
 - Family visits were encouraged and the visitors area was welcoming
 - Family Contact Officers did good work
- **Good healthcare in many areas**
 - Good support for mental health, addictions and long-term health conditions.
 - Good peer support, including Naloxone training and recovery services.

- **Good rehabilitation support**
 - The Recovery Hub and Life Skills programmes.
 - Good work with organisations helping people prepare for release

Main problems

- **Overcrowding**
 - The prison held too many people.
 - Single cells being shared by two people.
 - Limited privacy and storage space.
- **Living conditions**
 - Some cells had poor ventilation and mould in shower and toilet areas.
 - Some mattresses were old and uncomfortable.
- **Food**
 - People were unhappy with food quality, portions and choice.
 - Healthy options were limited.
- **Staffing pressures**
 - Staff shortages and sickness affected daily routines.
 - Activities, work and education were sometimes cancelled.
 - Many staff were inexperienced and the prison relied on overtime to keep services running.
- **Relationships and complaints**
 - Only about half said they felt treated well.
 - Most prisoners had little confidence in the complaints system and could not submit them confidentially.
- **Progression and release**
 - Serious delays in risk and programme assessments.
 - Not all prisoners could access the programmes they needed.
 - These delays affected progression and preparation for release.
 - This led to the prison receiving a **Poor** rating for our inspection standard - Transition to Community.
- **Healthcare gaps**
 - Some prisoners waited far too long for dental treatment, with waits of up to 80 weeks reported.
 - Psychological services needs to be easier to access.

Inspectors want these improvements

- Reduce overcrowding and return to **one prisoner per cell designed for one person**.
- Improve ventilation and remove mould from cells.
- Improve food quality, healthy options and food safety arrangements.
- Increase staffing levels and reduce disruption to daily routines.
- Improve relationships between staff and prisoners.
- Introduce a more effective anti-bullying approach.
- Make the complaints system confidential, reliable and trusted.
- Ensure prisoners can access risk assessments, programmes and progression opportunities on time.
- Increase vocational training and qualifications.

- Improve access to mental health support and dental treatment.

Final message

HMP Low Moss continues to provide some strong services, particularly in **healthcare, family contact, peer support and rehabilitation activities**. Staff worked hard in difficult circumstances and many positive initiatives were in place. However, **overcrowding, staff shortages, poor confidence in complaints, delays in progression and long waits for dental treatment** are having a significant impact on prisoners' lives. Inspectors expect HMP Low Moss, the Scottish Prison Service, the NHS and the Scottish Government to work together to address these issues and build on the prison's strengths.