



# Independent Prison Monitoring (IPM) Findings Annual Report

**Prison:**

**HMP ADDIEWELL**

**Year (1 April – 31 March):**

**2023 – 2024**

By HM INSPECTORATE OF PRISONS SCOTLAND



## Annual Monitoring Figures



Total number of visits: 70



Total number of missed weeks: 0



Total number of prisoner requests received: 341



Total number of IPM hours: 257

## Executive Summary

Whilst the journey is by no means over, HMP Addiewell is a prison in the process of being transformed. In April 2023, when the IPM Team provided their monthly report to HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland and the Director of HMP Addiewell, five of the nine standards we monitor were regarded as having some serious concerns or had a Red rating. Only one standard was regarded as being good or no concerns, with a Green rating. By March of 2024 that picture was reversed, with the IPM team considering five standards were good or no concerns, and only one remained with serious concerns.

The number of requests to see members of the IPM Team remains the highest in the prison estate and has increased from last year. The volume of requests makes it impossible for the IPM Team, made up entirely of volunteers, to see even a fraction of prisoners who ask to see us. Whilst the volume of requests started to fall around winter, the number of contacts rose once again in the new year.

The prisoner forums are a wonderful development, and it is hoped that this will give a voice to prisoners and reduce their need to contact the IPM Team.

The current management team and their staff should be commended for the work they have done so far. The IPM team look forward to reporting even more positively in 2025.

# General Observations

## Standard 1: Lawful and Transparent Custody

● Overall RAG rating: Amber

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Reception and the Early Days in Custody Unit were one of the few areas positively reported on last year, and they maintained their performance this year, were well run and welcoming areas of the prison. Prisoners reported that they felt safe on arrival, and that the prison was much more welcoming than they had expected. When IPMs observed prisoners being liberated they were treated decently.

Issues raised last year around the provision of reception packs were resolved during the year, and apart from the odd error, these aspects of the prison were running smoothly by the end of the year. By summer 2023 it appeared that the vast majority of prisoners were supplied with the things they were entitled to on arrival at the prison.

The one significant area of concern the IPM Team still have, which was raised last year and falls partially outside the control of the prison, is the housing of offence-protection prisoners within the Early Days in Custody Unit. HMP Addiewell is not able to house all those on offence-protection regimes appropriately. The IPM Team believes that HMP Addiewell should not be asked to house multiple prisoner populations, and that the SPS should review its use of the prison estate to rationalise and simplify the prisoner populations in all prisons.

## Standard 2: Decency

● Overall RAG rating: Green

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During the year the prison underwent a fairly major transformation in terms of decency. The previous annual report raised frustrations that issues raised by the IPMs had not been resolved. There were issues around food, and prisoners were not routinely being supplied with bedding, towels or even plates and cutlery. The team are delighted to report this is no longer the case.

By August the IPM Team were reporting significant improvements, and for the last five months have had very few reasons to raise issues with management regarding this standard. Where issues were raised, the prison were accepting of the IPM findings and took action to address issues immediately.

By the end of the year, prisoners in general rarely raised issues around food, other than the normal concerns you would expect when catering for over 700 people, three times a day. Hotplates were kept clean and access to the servery was being better controlled.

As in most prisons and the wider community, there were concerns about the impact of price increases. Prices of items available on the canteen have risen, whilst wages have generally stayed static.

Where long-term prisoners requested more ability to prepare food for themselves, the prison attempted to provide these facilities.

There remained some issues around the control of cleaning equipment, and on occasions hall stores were missing items. But given where the prison started these were considered minor issues overall.

### **Standard 3: Personal Safety**

● Overall RAG rating: Amber

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Again, during the year there was a drastic change in the reports IPMs heard from prisoners regarding concerns about violence and drug use. Whilst the prison can still improve, towards the end of 2023 the prison did not feel as chaotic and violent as it once had. Prisoners were less likely to tell IPMs they were scared for their safety.

A number of prisoners contacted the IPM Team to raise concerns about how the Management of Offenders at Risk Due to Any Substance (MORS) policy was being implemented. IPMs carried out an in-depth piece of work looking at this. We are pleased to report that the overwhelming majority of prisoners spoken to said they had been treated fairly and had been signposted for addictions support. However, levels of drug use in the prison remain far too high.

The IPM Team is concerned that decisions taken by the SPS regarding the end of a contract variation puts this hard work at risk. Following the HMIPS full inspection in 2022, the prison was allowed to operate a variation to their contract, bringing their core day and regime in line with all other Scottish prisons. However, this was ended in January 2024, and the prison is again required to unlock all prisoners for 12 hours a day. This means that prisoners not attending an activity are left to hang around on halls all day. Whilst the data on violence and drug use did not suggest a fall back to previous levels, prisoners informed IPMs they did not like the regime and increasingly mentioned concerns about these issues. The IPM Team question why HMP Addiewell is being asked to deliver a regime that is not asked of any other prison in Scotland, and where there appears to be evidence that it is not in the best interest of prisoners.

IPMs were saddened to learn of a number of deaths in custody during the year and extend our sympathy to all those affected.

### **Standard 4: Effective, Courteous and Humane Use of Authority**

● Overall RAG rating: Green

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As is the case across the prison estate, IPMs remain concerned about the number of people being held in segregation, and the length of time some of them spend there. However, IPMs recognise the work done by the staff in the Care and Separation Unit. They were generally very aware of the needs of all of those in their care and showed compassion and empathy when dealing with prisoners.

As mentioned above, the IPM Team are concerned about the number of people requiring an offence-protection regime in HMP Addiewell. Two whole halls had been set aside for them, and there was also an overspill onto a third hall, leading to a number of prisoners in effect being segregated. HMP Addiewell is not, in the opinion of the IPM Team, equipped to deal with these different populations. The prison is working with other prisons to manage the non-offence protection population, moving people to other prisons where they can return to mainstream halls. The SPS must however look at their population strategy.

During the year, prisoners raised concerns about the testing of items, and the belief that many things are providing false positive results. They also raised concerns about the restriction in suppliers for items sent in from outside the prison. IPMs recognise the difficult path prisoners have to take, to balance keeping contraband out the prison whilst allowing prisoners access to items from the outside. The prison had improved their searching and security measures during the year. Where they had to close parts of the prison, the SPS have been supportive and allowed them to take action to secure the prison.

## Standard 5: Respect, Autonomy and Protection

● Overall RAG rating: Green

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The prison has made huge strides during the year regarding engagement with prisoners. There are still concerns about the experience of the workforce, but officers are seen to be trying to build relationships. Last year we reported that too often officers were isolated or behind their desks. Whilst this still occurs, the IPMs have seen much more positive engagement as the year has progressed. The last annual report also stated that most of the issues brought to the attention of IPMs should have been resolved by officers. The IPM Team reported to the Director of the prison midway through the year that there was a reduction in prisoners approaching IPMs on the halls, in particular to ask about basic issues. Unfortunately this started to rise again after the withdrawal of the contract variation. IPMs believe this is because officers once again do not have the time to deal with those in their care properly, as they are being forced to deal with too many issues at one time. As noted above, the IPMs question if this is in the best interest of the prisoners in HMP Addiewell.

Complaints remained a cause for concern for prisoners, although confidence in the process did seem to improve slightly as the year went on. The IPMs are disappointed that plans to have complaint forms on the kiosk are still to be realised and urge the SPS and the prison to work together to make this happen without further delay.

One area the IPMs Team were most impressed by during the year was the introduction of the prisoner forums. These are a wonderful development and allow prisoners to raise issues with prison management on a regular basis. Prisoners on all the halls were aware of the meetings, who the prisoner representatives are, and the outcomes of discussions.

IPMs also noted the Prisoner Recognition events now being held, which were attended by prisoners, their families and friends as well as officers and senior managers. IPMs noted the genuine pride from those who attended. Prisoners reported extremely positively on the event. These were seen to be helping to foster a positive culture in the prison.

## Standard 6: Purposeful Activity

● Overall RAG rating: Amber

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Where activity takes place, the offer is exceptional. Those attending spoke highly of the things they can do. However, during the year too often workshops were cancelled due to staffing issues. There was a marked improvement over the year and the focus of the prison in this area was evident.

The music room, radio and life skills areas always seem lively with prisoners, and staff were well engaged. Those who attended education spoke highly of their teachers and the courses they were taking part in. The library and recovery café were welcoming spaces. IPMs noted the very positive outcomes from the employability scheme, which seemed well organised and well attended.

There was one serious concern regarded occasions during the year when prisoners on rules were not offered time in the fresh air. IPMs acknowledge how much of a challenge this could be when a number of prisoners need to be exercised separately from the rest of the hall, however it is not a negotiable aspect of prison life. Prisoners did not raise this concern to IPMs in the latter part of the year, so we hope the prison has found a way to ensure it does not occur again.

## Standard 7: Transitions from Custody into the Community

● Overall RAG rating: Green

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As with purposeful activity, some of the work being done by the Employability Team was remarkable. Good progress was made identifying companies to offer employment to prisoners on liberation. The employer engagement event was an excellent development for the prison. The prisoners were excited to be there, as were the employers and charities involved. There was a real buzz in the room and energy about the way forward. Several prisoners spoken to spoke positively about the experience and about their future prospects.

A man leaving the prison was provided with a bike from the bike workshop because transport was a barrier to employment for him.

IPMs commend the concerted effort in this area and look forward to seeing it develop in the coming year.

The issue of progression was raised by a few prisoners, who, for various reasons, felt they were not able to progress. In some cases this is due to issues outside of the prisons control, but there could be better communication with prisoners regarding what is happening and why.

## Standard 8: Organisational Effectiveness

● Overall RAG rating: Amber

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There have been significant improvements in the staffing situation compared to last year. The prison know they still have a way to go to achieve the retention rates they wish, but as the year has progressed experience levels have increased amongst staff, and their deployment appears to be more structured and thought through. At the beginning of the year it was not uncommon to find two staff working together on a hall with only a matter of months experience between them, or to find staff working in unfamiliar areas. On one occasion, IPMs spoke to two staff who had both been deployed to fill a gap on the hall created by the movement of the other. Whilst there may have been a legitimate reason for this, at the time it demonstrated what appeared to be a chaotic and firefighting approach to staff deployment. The IPM Team are pleased to report that by the end of the year this no longer appeared to be the situation. Most staff, when asked, said they were working in their normal area, and newer officers tended to be placed with those with some experience.

Over the year, prisoners reported that things in the prison had improved. IPMs spoke to one individual who they had had several dealings with previously, who stated that he had been released and was now back in HMP Addiewell and had noticed a real and meaningful difference in the prison.

Most significantly to the IPM Team, it is noted that information was far easier to access from staff in HMP Addiewell and follow up is much improved. IPMs feel that they have a positive working relationship with the Senior Management Team, and that where issues were raised they were accepted and relevant information was provided.

As noted above, IPMs are disappointed that the contract variation has ended, and wonder if this is in the best interests of the prisoners. The IPMs are clear in their belief that the regime being offered in the last year has helped to create a stable and safe environment for staff and prisoners and worry this will be put at risk.

Finally, as reported in most prisons, the failure of GeoAmey to fulfil their contractual obligations is unacceptable. IPMs have been informed of numerous missed hospital appointments or escorts failing to attend to take someone to a funeral, or to visit relatives in palliative care. Whilst the prison will often cover these escorts, that then takes staff out of the prison.

## Standard 9: Health and Wellbeing

● Overall RAG rating: Red

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Throughout the year healthcare services appeared stretched. Most prisoners spoken to raised concerns about access to healthcare services, stating they could not access mental health and addiction services, and that waits for primary care were excessive. Many reported that they could not get appointments, and requests went unanswered. However, at the end of the reporting year wait times were reasonable, with only a one week waiting list to see addictions and mental health teams, and no waiting list to see primary care.

There were also a couple of specific incidents where the care of prisoners fell, in the opinion of the IPM team, well below what would be expected. Conversely, the IPM Team are aware of the work done by the Healthcare Team to support people under the influence of illicit substances, and that they have been praised by paramedics for the lifesaving actions they have taken.

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### RAG (Red, Amber, Green) status key:

- (Red) Some serious concerns
- (Amber) Some slight concerns
- (Green) No concerns / good practice

*RAG rating: where IPMs felt each standard would be rated given their experience - not a complete analysis but based on the judgement of the IPM team.*

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### Key Issues

1. The contract variation and the regime
2. Staffing – recruitment and retention
3. Healthcare provision



### Encouraging Observations

The prison is moving in a positive direction. IPMs were particularly encouraged to learn of the appointment of specialist staff around violence reduction and addictions, including those with lived experience. This improved the engagement of prisoners and should lead to more positive outcomes.

The work from the Offender Management Team was incredibly positive, staffing levels looked to be slowly improving, and the prisoner forum was an example of good practice. The IPM Team were also very pleased to learn that serving prisoners meet new prison officers to share their insights on life in prison, and the skills and attributes needed to be a successful prison officer from their experience.



## Conclusion

Whilst there is still some way to go, the prison has made significant progress over the last year. When the current Director took over, IPMs were regularly hearing about failures in the most basic aspects of prisoner care such as prisoners left without bedding or plates. That is not the case anymore. The prison is now functioning and stable. Violence and drug use, whilst still too high, appears more under control.

The Senior Management Team are visible and proactive, and the majority of staff are keen to do their job well. More needs to be done around retention of new officers, but the signs are encouraging. Whilst there is work still to do around ensuring all staff have the knowledge they need, and robust systems are in place to maintain standards, this is a big step forward. IPMs further recognise the hard work that will be needed to maintain the gains made so far.

The prisoner forums seem to have acted as a real catalyst for change, with prisoners having a space to raise concerns. This may seem a small change, but the impact has been huge.

The main concern the IPM Team have as we start a new reporting year is around the ending of the contract variation. The team hope to be proved wrong but believe the return to the original contract is unhelpful and against the interests of the prisoners living there. No other prison in Scotland offers the 12-hour open regime that HMP Addiewell is required to provide. The interests and safety of the prisoners should come first. The IPM Team ask the SPS if they are confident that this is indeed the case?