



Independent Prison Monitoring (IPM) Findings Annual Report

Prison:
HMP Castle Huntly

Year (1 April – 31 March):
2023 – 2024

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Annual Monitoring Figures



Total number of visits: 52



Total number of missed weeks: 0



Total number of prisoner requests received: 7



Total number of IPM hours: 176.5

Executive Summary

2023-24 was a busy year for the Independent Prison Monitoring Team, and the statutory requirement of at least one prison visit per week was achieved. As with previous years the IPM Team received little by way of prisoner requests but ensured they spoke to many prisoners, in order to gauge prisoners' views on various aspects of life at the prison. IPMs also carried out their duties in monitoring the nine HMIPS standards. The team benefitted from having a good complement of IPMs compared with previous years.

This annual report highlights the key findings that the HMP Castle Huntly IPM Team made during the year, along with the average rating for each standard. The report also sets out areas of good practice.

General Observations

Standard 1: Lawful and transparent custody

● Overall RAG rating: Green

IPMs observed prisoners returning to the establishment from work placements etc. Prisoners were treated with dignity and respect by the staff, with clear evidence of good working relationships. Prisoners clearly knew what was expected of them. All prisoners were patted down and their bags and backpacks searched. The prescribed quota of one in ten prisoners being body searched was carried out and was done in privacy. Overall IPMs felt the process was conducted fairly and efficiently.

IPMs discussed the induction process with prisoners who reported that they were satisfied with it.

Standard 2: Decency

● Overall RAG rating: Green

IPMs felt that the accommodation in Murray Wing was basic but adequate, and the single occupancy rooms with ensuite toilet and shared showers, were deemed acceptable. The disabled room looked more welcoming (but was the only one in the whole establishment).

IPMs discussed the arrangements for supporting prisoners who have mobility issues with staff and one prisoner in particular. The prisoner said that some of the ramps were not suitable for him and the lift that was installed specifically indicated 'not for use with electric wheel chairs'. He did however confirm that staff assisted him when necessary. IPMs concluded that despite this anomaly, there was adequate support in place for him.

There was a good system for storing personal belongings when prisoners were on home leave, and IPMs also noted evidence of stocks of clothing and bedding, and that the laundry system appeared to work well.

IPMs had a concern around how early meals were served, for example lunch being served at 10:45, which could lead to prisoners being hungry later in the day. IPMs discussed this with prisoners who said they welcomed the option of an earlier meal time to fit in with other activities they did during the day. IPMs later learned there were two lunch sittings and therefore welcomed the choice offered to prisoners and no longer held any concern.

IPMs spoke with a number of prisoners about the food. Some prisoners in Bruce Wing said that they liked the food much more than when they were in closed prisons, as it was fresh and hot at the point of collection. One of these prisoners said they couldn't eat certain foods, but he felt the alternative options were there for him at Castle Huntly. Some prisoners in Murray Wing said they did not like the food as they felt that while there were healthy options available, there was not enough to accommodate everyone, and they also said they were getting the same food each week, so the menu lacked variety. IPMs did not note any concerns about food and confirmed that there was a good range and variety on offer. IPMs stressed to prisoners that the prison facilitated Food Forum meetings where prisoners could raise food related issues.

Standard 3: Personal safety

● Overall RAG rating: Green

IPMs confirmed that only protection prisoners were allowed in Bruce Wing where they were housed, which provided them with a degree of personal safety. It was also confirmed that they could safely access all parts of the prison alongside other prisoner groups.

IPMs confirmed that daily random drug testing took place, for the safety of prisoners and those working at the prison.

IPMs noted that there were plenty of posters displaying information on the SPS Anti-Bullying Strategy.

Standard 4: Effective, courteous and humane use of authority

● Overall RAG rating: Green

IPMs worked with a prisoner who had a complaint about being suspended from home leaves due to an adverse circumstance report (ACR). When IPMs looked into this further, it became apparent that the prisoner had in fact had a number of ACRs, and had in the opinion of both staff and IPMs been shown more leniency by maintaining access to external education opportunities that he may otherwise have not been entitled to. It had been agreed that the prisoner would benefit from the access to education. This person-centred approach was noted as good practice by IPMs.

Standard 5: Respect, autonomy and protection against mistreatment

● Overall RAG rating: Green

IPMs observed prisoner-staff relationships as being positive. Prisoners also spoke highly of the support from staff and reported feeling well-treated at the prison.

A few prisoners had raised some concerns to IPMs about how they were spoken to by officers. IPMs took time over a number of visits to observe staff/prisoner interactions and concluded that staff and prisoners generally appeared to get on well.

While observing the home-leave checking-out process IPMs saw very good relationships between the officers and prisoners. The officers demonstrated good communication as they dealt with the prisoners, explaining what would happen next and where they should go to next. The tone of all conversations was friendly.

Prisoners confirmed to IPMs that PIAC meetings were held every month, which was welcomed. However IPMs did note that the minutes of these meetings were not always readily available. Management responded positively to this and rectified it. IPMs latterly confirmed that up-to-date minutes were made available.

IPMs noted that there was a range of useful information for prisoners on noticeboards throughout the prison, which was positive. However, it was clear that some of it was out-of-date, in some cases years out of date. Information posters were also viewed to be rather wordy, and IPMs recommended making them more succinct and reader friendly. Management responded positively to this and endeavoured to ensure that noticeboards were brought up to date. It was noted that there was also the relatively new TV information channel to share information with prisoners, which IPMs welcomed.

Standard 6: Purposeful activity

● Overall RAG rating: Green

Work placements available to prisoners had a good range of different types of work across a large geographical area. IPMs thought it provided a good range of choice for prisoners. IPMs were pleased to hear that work was being done to enhance external work placements, whereby prisoners would secure jobs on release with companies who provided the placements.

IPMs followed up on the recent HMIPS full inspection report recommendation that all prisoners working in the Industrial Cleaning Party (ICP) should be 'BICS' Trained. IPMs spoke with staff,

who said that at the time there were 32 prisoners on the ICP but only four were BICS trained. Prisoner and staff availability were cited as contributory factors.

IPMs were pleased to see prisoners being facilitated to raise money for charity via a Cyclathon, raising £1200 in the process. IPMs believed this was important to give prisoners a sense of purpose and responsibility.

Education provision at the prison was viewed by IPMs to be valuable. Prisoners appeared to be very engaged in education opportunities, as did the staff involved in its delivery.

Standard 7: Transitions from custody into the community

● Overall RAG rating: Green

IPMs appreciated that the majority of activity taking place at the prison, as well as external work placements and home leaves, was specifically designed to assist prisoners in the transition from custody to the community. IPMs did not hear any significant concerns from prisoners regarding home leaves.

Prisoners spoke highly of the Life Skills Unit; designed to equip prisoners to better live independently upon release. Staff were also supportive of the Unit, demonstrated by their enthusiasm to come up with ideas on how to improve the Unit further. IPMs were equally supportive of the Unit.

Standard 8: Organisational effectiveness

● Overall RAG rating: Green

Some staff said to IPMs they had concerns about the information that closed conditions prisons were giving to prisoners who were waiting to come to the Open Estate. Prisoners had not been made aware, for example, that there was a good chance they may have to share a room. Management at the prison were aware of the issues and assured IPMs they were working with other establishments to ensure that the correct info was being given to prisoners in closed conditions prisons.

Refurbishments in the three wings appeared to be well planned, with minimal disruption for prisoners who were required to move halls at times. Prisoners were well informed of the plans in advance and appeared to accept the need for the work. Prisoners who were moved had the opportunity to choose their cell mates rather than having them imposed.

The long-standing issue of prisoner access to faith communal worship services in the community seemed to get a resolution, with any prisoner approved for community access able to go to external services. However, IPMs heard that the difficulties GEOAmev faced in fulfilling their contract may have an impact on capacity to transport prisoners to such services. IPMs recognised however that prisoners would still have access to faith services in the prison.

Standard 9: Health and wellbeing

● Overall RAG rating: Green

IPMs heard that there had been some issues with the late delivery of medication to the prison. Medication was delivered on a Tuesday and NHS staff worked longer on these days to process receipt of medication. IPMs learned however that there could be problems if a prisoner arrived from a closed establishment on a different day, and the sending establishment did not send any relevant medication with the prisoner.

IPMs discussed with NHS staff the arrangements for prisoners accessing a number of medical services, including GP, dentist, podiatry and pharmacy, and concluded that the arrangements for those were good.

IPMs were told that there had been an incident whereby a diabetic prisoner had fallen quite ill. NHS Tayside conducted a Local Adverse Event Review. IPMs spoke with prisoners towards the end of the reporting period and picked up on some potential gaps around support for prisoners with diabetes, for example there not being a trained diabetes specialist nurse based at the prison, as there are at other prisons. Prison management agreed to work with NHS Tayside on this.

Prisoners expressed to IPMs how the set-up at the prison benefitted their mental health and wellbeing. Examples included having lunch in the canteen rather than in their rooms, having to order medication themselves, which they said was good preparation for life outside, and the freedom to move around the prison unescorted. IPMs noted that good mental health and wellbeing was positive in terms of reducing risk of reoffending.

IPMs were pleased to hear that face to face GP appointments were at roughly a two- week wait, but telephone appointments were usually the same day. The inclusion of telephone appointments was deemed to be a valuable one and should be considered for other establishments. The mental health appointments waiting time was at roughly four weeks. These waiting times, IPMs believed, compared favourably with those in the community.

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.



Key Issues

There were no key issues identified through the monitoring activity of the IPMs.



Encouraging Observations

Staff/prisoner relationships were deemed by IPMs to be excellent.

The Independent Living Unit was also deemed to be excellent, as was the initiative to introduce telephone-based healthcare appointments.



Conclusion

2023-24 was a positive year in terms of Independent Prison Monitoring findings at HMP Castle Huntly. Good staff /prisoner relationships were observed and contributed positively to this report.. Where there were issues identified, prison management accepted these and moved quickly to rectify them.