



Independent Prison Monitoring (IPM) Findings Annual Report

Prison:
HMP Glenochil

Year (1 April – 31 March):
2025 – 2026



Annual Monitoring Figures

		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
	Total number of visits:	61	51	54
	Total number of missed weeks:	1	3	3
	Total number of prisoner requests received:	69	143	140
	Total number of IPM hours:	193	149	162

Executive Summary

During the reporting year, Independent Prison Monitors (IPMs) observed a prison operating under sustained operational pressure, most notably from population levels and staff shortages, and national constraints affecting progression. Across the nine HMIPS Inspection Standards, performance was mixed, but with several areas of stability and good practice evident.

IPMs found that the use of segregation under various Prison Rules was properly recorded and understood by staff. However, concerns persisted regarding the prolonged use of segregation, particularly for prisoners with significant mental health needs.

Standards relating to decency were under pressure throughout the year. While cleanliness within halls and work areas was frequently observed to be good, repeated issues around the provision of clothing, linen, and toilet paper, were reported. Food quality attracted consistent criticism from prisoners and some staff, and IPMs noted concerns about the affordability of canteen items against the backdrop of unchanged prison wages and rising external costs. These factors affected prisoners' perceptions of fairness and decency, particularly for those without access to paid work.

Relationships between staff and prisoners were generally observed to be respectful, calm, and well managed. Visible leadership and courteous exercise of authority contributed to a stable atmosphere for much of the year, despite periods of fragility linked to staffing issues, for example sickness absence.

Purposeful activity remained a relative strength, with IPMs observing high-quality work, education, recreation, and family contact, including use of virtual visits and family events. However, access to purposeful activity outside staff's core working hours, delays in visits, and administrative failures around accumulated visits indicated uneven access to entitlements.

Transitions from custody into the community were affected by delays in social work reports, programme availability, and staffing capacity, affecting readiness for parole and prisoner confidence in progression processes. Organisational effectiveness showed improvement over the year, with morale stabilising and leadership visibility strengthening, although staffing shortages and population pressures continued to constrain delivery.

Health and wellbeing services were often observed to be delivered with care and competence, particularly in routine healthcare interactions. However, IPMs did have concerns about some prisoners managed in the Separation and Reintegration Unit, where their mental health needs may have been better met in a non-prison setting.

Overall, staff at HMP Glenochil demonstrated resilience and skill in challenging circumstances.

General Observations

Standard 1: Lawful and Transparent Custody

IPMs repeatedly heard from prisoners held on an order for lifelong restriction (OLR), expressing frustration and anger about perceived disparities between Scottish OLR arrangements and IPP developments in England and Wales. While recognised as a matter for the Scottish Government rather than local management, this issue appeared to contribute to feelings of injustice and rising tension among a specific prisoner cohort.

Standard 2: Decency

IPMs frequently observed residential areas, workspaces, and kitchens to be clean and orderly, with clear efforts made by staff and work parties to manage litter and maintain hygiene.

Food service arrangements were generally well managed, with systems observed to ensure all prisoners received meals. Menus were observed to be varied. However, at times, food quality attracted criticism from prisoners and some staff, attributed in part to procurement disruptions and budgetary constraints.

There were repeated reports of shortages in essential items, for example clothing, towels, soap, toilet paper, and linen. While these shortages were often described as brief, their recurrence suggested systemic pressure.

Cost-of-living pressures were evident. Although wages were paid in line with the national wages policy, they had not increased in line with inflation since 2012, and canteen prices had risen. Prisoners without work were particularly affected, generally having less money to spend, leading to concerns around their ability to supplement basic provision.

A growing prisoner population at Glenochil led to more prisoners having to share cells designed for one, which was of particular concern and contrary to recognised European standards for cell size.

Standard 3: Personal Safety

Drugs caused significant disruption, contributing to increased use of the SRU and pressure on staff. However, IPMs observed a strong focus on seeking to prevent drug misuse at the prison, including the installation of anti-drone screens and use of drug-detection dogs. Overall, efforts to tackle the influx and use of drugs was reported to be positive, and a significant drop in recorded drug misuse over the reporting period was noted.

A Listener's service run by The Samaritans was available at the prison, though this seemed to be focussed more within Abercrombie hall.

IPMs regularly witnessed the efforts made by staff to keep mainstream prisoners and prisoners on protection separate during route movements and other activities. IPMs also heard evidence of the person-centred approach that staff applied in managing non-offence protection prisoners, including facilitating individualised food delivery and escorted access to daily showers and time in the fresh air. IPMs felt this was particularly welcome given the constraints brought by overcrowding and managing a complex regime.

Standard 4: Effective, Courteous and Humane Use of Authority

In the SRU, staff appeared knowledgeable about rules and reintegration planning, and IPMs felt assured that use of authority was subject to oversight. IPMs had concerns around the duration of certain rules, particularly long-term Rule 95, and Rule 41 where prisoners presented with

significant mental health needs. Staff reported difficulties managing prisoners with acute mental illness.

IPMs heard good examples of staff providing individualised help to prisoners, for example travelling to HMP Kilmarnock to pick up a prisoner's property following his transfer with the wrong property. However, this also served as an example of why IPMs had concerns overall regarding the effectiveness, nationally, of the property transfer process.

IPMs also observed structured and thorough procedures for the movement of different prisoner groups, ensuring safety and order, and managed by courteous staff. Serious incidents were reported to have been handled calmly and effectively, with appropriate management oversight.

Standard 5: Respect, Autonomy and Protection Against Mistreatment

Throughout the year, IPMs observed positive interactions between staff and prisoners. In halls, visits areas, and the SRU, staff demonstrated skill, courtesy, and sensitivity. Prisoners and visitors also described respectful treatment by staff. Even during periods of pressure, such as where there were staffing issues or increased SRU occupancy, the atmosphere around the prison was generally calm.

The system for allowing prisoners to see an Independent Prison Monitor worked well, with the Glenochil IPM Team receiving a comparably high number of prisoners requests compared with other teams.

There was information about a range of services available on hall noticeboards. Copies of the recent HMIPS inspection reports were available to prisoners, and there was an easy read version on noticeboards. However, IPMs felt that the communication of information regarding a Scottish Government consultation on Parole was poor, and prisoners stated they were not aware that it was already open. IPMs identified that this was due to a lack of information materials being given to the Scottish Prison Service from Government, and once the matter was escalated by IPMs via HMIPS, and the Government acted, the prison quickly made relevant information materials available to prisoners.

Standard 6: Purposeful Activity

While staffing shortages had frequently led to the closure of work sheds, IPMs observed extensive purposeful activity throughout the year, including education, gardening, and recreation. Educational spaces were busy and well maintained, and prisoners frequently spoke positively about skills development opportunities.

Prisoners spoke positively about access to visits, including family visits and virtual visits, the visiting centre, and the prison staff supporting the visits. Family members described their visiting experience at HMP Glenochil as very positive, noting that staff had been helpful and showed good empathy.

IPMs identified several cases where there were delays for prisoners getting prison transfers to access accumulated visits under Rule 65.

Standard 7: Transitions from Custody into the Community

As reported in previous years, a number of prisoners complained to IPMs about delays in accessing rehabilitation programmes, and staff and management confirmed this to be the case.

Adding to prisoners' frustration about progression, IPMs heard of several instances where delayed social work reports adversely affected the parole process, and potentially the time prisoners spent inside prior to release on parole. The social work related delays were reported to be in part due to the increasing numbers of OLR prisoners at the prison who required far more social work input,

without any matching increase in social workers. Over the course of the year more staff were allocated to this area of work, and latterly SPS held discussions with the Scottish Government with a view to securing more resources to address the situation.

IPMs reported that the arrangements for the liberation of prisoners were satisfactory.

Standard 8: Organisational Effectiveness

IPMs frequently observed visible leadership, including the Governor and other senior management engaging with staff and prisoners. Morale appeared to improve over the year, although it remained sensitive to staffing shortages and population pressures. Recruitment efforts were evident, but sickness absence affected operations, in particular prisoner access to purposeful activity (see above). Despite this, IPMs saw evidence of well-planned and managed staffing rosters, with adequate staff present and a stable positive atmosphere in the prison.

Standard 9: Health and Wellbeing

IPMs observed the issuing of medication with a well-managed orderly queuing system. Prisoners appeared calm. NHS staff were helpful and well mannered. IPMs also observed SPS staff speaking with prisoners and enquiring about how they were feeling, their sleeping pattern etc., demonstrating genuine care and concern.

However, IPMs reported concern in December 2025 about delays in the delivery of flu vaccinations to the prison, particularly as it had been widely recognised in the autumn that there was a possibility of widespread flu across the country. IPMs felt there should have been plenty time to prepare more effectively, and were subsequently pleased to see that vaccinations were swiftly administered to priority groups very soon after they were delivered to the prison.

IPMs expressed concern that some prisoners held in the SRU, displaying significant mental health issues, might not receive the appropriate level of care in a prison setting and instead should perhaps be managed in secure care conditions (for example the state hospital). Managers agreed this was an issue, and explained to IPMs the multidisciplinary process employed at the prison to consider such cases, and where required make referrals for more appropriate care settings.

NHS demonstrated a willingness to receive feedback from prisoners, in the form of a Health Representative Committees in each hall, involving prisoner representatives. Prisoners gave positive feedback on this initiative.