



# Independent Prison Monitoring (IPM) Findings Annual Report

**Prison:**

**HMP Inverness**

**Year (1 April – 31 March):**

**2023 – 2024**

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## Annual Monitoring Figures



Total number of visits: 64



Total number of missed weeks: 0



Total number of prisoner requests received: 13



Total number of IPM hours: 198.5

## 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 made up for this by going out of their way to ensure they spoke to lots of 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 sized complement of IPMs.

This annual report highlights the key findings that the HMP Inverness 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

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The prison worked well to ensure that prisoners on remand had the correct warrant and that those on remand beyond the statutory time period had the correct extension to their original warrant. This was reviewed weekly.

IPMs observed the prison's admissions process and concluded that it was well run. IPMs also monitored prisoner induction and noted that it seemed to work very well. One recently inducted prisoner stated that although they were nervous about coming into prison for the first time, reception staff were very pleasant and explained what would happen. The admission process also identified prisoners in need of being placed on 'Talk-To-Me', which suggested that the process worked well in identifying arriving prisoners' medical needs.

IPMs discussed arrangements for cell sharing risk assessments with staff and concluded that the system appeared to be comprehensive in the checks made. Staff said that it seemed to work well in practice.

## **Standard 2: Decency**

● Overall RAG rating: Green

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IPMs observed the prison looking clean and tidy, and the atmosphere was calm and well ordered.

There was a general sense among prisoners that the prison was running well and that staff were working hard to ensure a high standard of decency against all quality indicators.

IPMs rated hygiene standards as good.

Bedding quality was viewed to be reasonable and cleaned on a regular cycle. Replacement items were usually available if genuinely needed. Basic toiletries were provided, with alternative options available on the canteen lists.

Prison clothing was adequate and used by most prisoners. The option to have their own clothes sent in by family members was available.

Prisoners talked positively about the quality of food, generally felt to be better than available in other prisons. IPMs discussed budgetary pressures facing the management of the Kitchen. Staff appeared to be on top of producing quality food, whilst being very aware of their responsibilities in controlling costs. IPMs detected no reduction in the quality of food or portion sizes. The Governor reassured the IPM Team that the prison would continue to ensure that the required standards around choice, nutritional value and portion sizes would be met. Muslim prisoners reported being pleased with the range of halal food on offer.

## **Standard 3: Personal safety**

● Overall RAG rating: Green

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IPMs spoke with several prisoners, and all reported feeling safe, and that they regarded HMP Inverness as a safe prison. IPMs observed good interactions and relaxed conversation between prisoners and staff in all halls. The atmosphere in the prison was deemed by IPMs to be safe and relaxed.

IPMs reviewed the paperwork of some prisoners on Talk-To-Me and concluded that they were being managed appropriately.

## **Standard 4: Effective, courteous and humane use of authority**

● Overall RAG rating: Green

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IPMs confirmed that in the event of prisoners being held in the SRU, they had reintegration plans in place when IPMs checked.

## **Standard 5: Respect, autonomy and protection against mistreatment**

● Overall RAG rating: Green

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IPMs continuously observed prisoner/staff relations during the course of their visits, and confidently concluded that relations at Inverness were very good. Prisoners who had been in other prisons noted that relations with staff at Inverness were among the best.

Prisoners who had experience of other prisons told IPMs that staff at Inverness generally had more time for prisoners and were generally more courteous than elsewhere.

IPMs concluded that efforts were clearly being made by staff to involve prisoners regarding service improvement. Although there did appear to be a lack of engagement by prisoners, IPMs saw excellent evidence of efforts being made to engage prisoners in the form of the circulation of well written and accessible minutes of Prisoners' Council meetings.

The Personal Officer (PO) system worked well in support of Integrated Case Management and Progression. The system was perhaps less effective as a personal support mechanism for individuals struggling with life in jail, and some prisoners said they did not know who their PO was. IPMs confirmed all convicted prisoners had an allocated PO. With a few exceptions no remand prisoners had an allocated PO. However, it was noted by IPMs that the nature and layout of Inverness prison meant that informal prisoner support was readily available from hall staff. IPMs saw strong evidence of an improvement culture at Inverness, with plenty of discussion about efforts being made to improve the effectiveness of the PO system, with efforts being made to deliver a PO element within staff training/awareness sessions. The basis of allocation of POs to prisoners may not always have resulted in a good match, and prisoners were able to request a change, however some said that they felt uneasy about doing so. IPMs felt that there was perhaps some need for greater clarity about priority outcomes expected from the PO system. Overall, the view of the system was a positive one, particularly given the intention to improve it further

## **Standard 6: Purposeful activity**

● Overall RAG rating: Green

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All prisoners reported good arrangements for family visits and contact. IPMs attended some visit sessions and spoke with staff and visitors. The visit room, although small, felt warm and comfortable with a corner for children, and toys for various ages. There was praise for the Family Liaison Officer who had initiated many improvements, especially for children. There was a range of information leaflets in the waiting area advertising support services in the community, and for assistance with addictions and child services for families affected by imprisonment. The visitors said the staff were friendly and accommodating.

There was an ongoing sense of frustration among remand prisoners about the shortage of work and limited time out of cell. Later in the year, IPMs saw evidence of increasing availability of work for remand prisoners, to the credit of staff, it had generally been recognised that the size of the establishment was a barrier to providing work for remands. Although the prison rules do not require remands to be given work, HMIPS believed opportunities should be more available.

IPMs were pleased to observe several prisoners taking part in a Life Skills course in the Library, and also noted the Library was used for a range of other activities such as a Chess Club, Narcotics Anonymous, Recovery Cafe and Lego Club. This also demonstrated good use of the limited space and facilities in HMP Inverness.

IPMs considered the standard of Education to be excellent, with prisoners appearing interested and engaged in their studies. IPMs reported that impressive efforts were being made to increase the level of purposeful activity available to prisoners, despite longer lock-up times. IPMs also observed prisoners painting murals in the Visits Room. Prisoners said they enjoyed the work, and that they were doing it for the benefit of the visitors. IPMs felt this was very worthwhile, undertaking work for the benefit of others, and something that could motivate prisoners into working after release.

Access to the gym was thought to be limited, potentially as it is a small gym, however access to general indoor and outdoor recreation was thought to be good.

Some Muslim prisoners said that they were disappointed at the lack of organised worship or access to an Imam.

## **Standard 7: Transitions from custody into the community**

● Overall RAG rating: Amber

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IPMs spoke with prisoners, who said that they felt confident in the build up to being released. IPMs felt the arrangements to prepare prisoners for release were good, including being set up with employment post-release. IPMs were impressed with the range of external agencies that came to the prison to work with prisoners. This helped prepare them for release. The prison's Case Management process also considered prisoners' needs upon release.

IPMs were however concerned to hear about a reduction of funding for Throughcare. This could have a significant impact on prisoners upon release to the community. The Governor provided assurances that the prison was looking at the issue to see what support could be provided to prisoners within the resources they had, including input from third sector and other community partners.

## **Standard 8: Organisational Effectiveness**

● Overall RAG rating: Amber

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Staff noted that the recent changes in management had gone smoothly and were well organised.

Continuing problems with GEOAmeys' capacity to transfer prisoners led to a couple of young people having to stay at HMP Inverness in 'effective isolation' due to the need to keep them separate from adult prisoners. Staff were unhappy about this, logistically, as well as having concern for young people, and IPMs echoed this concern as a potential breach of their human rights. Thankfully one young person only had to stay one night, the other for three, but it did exacerbate the issues posed by poor GEOAmeys performance. It needs to be stressed that the prison staff did all they could to ensure the comfort of the young people.

IPMs learned of the rising prisoner population, and staff said they were preparing for this level to be the norm. It was suggested that a degree of overcrowding could lead to prisoners spending more time in their cells, in order for staff to ensure order and safety.

While this standard is rated amber, it is not a rating of the performance of the prison management and staff, who performed admirably in the face of the issues.

## **Standard 9: Health and Wellbeing**

● Overall RAG rating: Amber

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IPMs considered that healthcare provision was well organised, with short waiting times. IPMs observed nurses working with prisoners who were being admitted at Reception and thought the process was very good and the prisoner was handled with respect.

IPMs heard more examples of where the failure of GEOAmey in fulfilling their contract had a significant impact on prisoners, including examples where prisoners were unable to get to external medical appointments, in breach of their right to healthcare. IPMs recognised that this was not the fault of staff at the prison, and indeed IPMs were aware that staff were going above and beyond to mitigate the problems caused by GEO Amey.

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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. GEO Amey's long running failure to transport a number of prisoners to hospital appointments, in breach of their right to healthcare.
2. Rising prison population at a prison where facilities are already stretched.
3. Limitations caused by the small size of the building and limited facilities.



## Encouraging Observations

Staff/prisoner relationships were viewed by IPMs to be very good.



## Conclusion

2023-24 was a positive year in terms of Independent Prison Monitoring findings at HMP Inverness. Staff/prisoner relationships were key to that, as detailed above. While standards eight and nine were given an amber rating, this was due to external factors to the prison rather than the performance of staff at the prison.

The size and age of the building proved to be a challenge, and staff worked well to ensure that those limitations did not have too significant an impact upon regime provision.

Finally, the rising prison population, affecting the whole estate, was an emerging concern towards the end of the reporting period. The prison staff did well to manage a range of regimes within the small prison, however IPMs are concerned that further population increases will limit prisoners' access to these regimes.