



Independent Prison Monitoring (IPM) Findings Annual Report

Prison:

HMP Kilmarnock

Year (1 April – 31 March):

2023 – 2024

By Chris Collins



Annual Monitoring Figures



Total number of visits: 53



Total number of missed weeks: 4



Total number of prisoner requests received: 91



Total number of IPM hours: 222

Executive Summary

Monitors continued to report on a well-run prison which felt safe and orderly. IPMs were made to feel welcome and assisted by staff and management in dealing with prisoner requests and in making observations. There was excellent provision of purposeful activity on a daily basis for both convicted and remand prisoners, with some degree of limitation in the run up to the transition to SPS management in March this year.

Monitors acknowledged the transition task had been enormous with many moving parts to be managed, but good preparation appeared to have progressed things smoothly. ATM notices to prisoners and effective communications in the build up to 17 March maintained good order and minimised uncertainty prior to the transition. IPMs noted the transitions went well and will continue to monitor impact on prisoners in the coming months.

IPMs have commented positively on personal safety in HMP Kilmarnock. Management have demonstrated a clear and constant vision through the year to maintain strong security measures and to keep prisoners and staff safe.

The key issues of healthcare for prisoners remains and IPMs will continue to liaise with management and NHS and include their feedback from prisoners. The continued cancellation by GEOAmeY of transport to external appointments for prisoners remains a concern as noted below.

General Observations

Standard 1: Lawful and Transparent Custody

● Overall RAG rating: Green

The reception processes were observed throughout the year when prisoners were being admitted. The hand over between GEOAmeY and prison staff was generally observed to be smooth and prisoners were spoken to throughout. The admission process was conducted efficiently and efforts made to facilitate rapid transfer of prisoners to residential blocks. Provision for foreign nationals and prisoners from minority groups were in place for them to understand processes. At times throughout the year The Insiders service of peer support from existing prisoner to new admissions had been variable, and occasionally did not appear to be in place.

IPMs commented that reception could be very busy at times due to multiple admissions. On one occasion, a prisoner was awaiting an ambulance, SERCO and NHS staff were observed to be attending to all prisoners with courtesy and understanding.

Some individuals new to the prison system, reported delays in receiving induction, though IPMs have not established whether this was routine experience for new admissions or not.

Standard 2: Decency

● Overall RAG rating: Amber

IPMs noted that overall cell accommodation and food standards were adequate. There was a robust system to replace bedding. The Monitoring Team remain concerned at the level of cell sharing, particularly in A wing, housing remand prisoners. The risk assessment for cell sharing has been described to IPMs and appears robust.

Cells were an inadequate size for two people and the lack of privacy for using the shared toilet was not ideal. IPMs recognised pressure on the prison and cell sharing was not their preferred option. Increasing pressure on the prison system will increase use of cell sharing. IPMs will continue to monitor, in particular the cell sharing risk assessment.

The kitchen had been noted to be in very good and clean order, with appropriate temperature checks and safety measures in place. All areas of HMP Kilmarnock were noted to be clean and well maintained. Only two cells, one in each houseblock, with wheelchair access and disabled toilet and shower. IPMs would enquire whether this fulfils the need within the establishment. IPMs witnessed staff take a decision to put a prisoner on MORS during visits in this period and noted a proactive and thorough process.

Standard 3: Personal Safety

● Overall RAG rating: Green

Overall IPMs were told that prisoners feel safe this year.

Monitors observed a prisoner reporting that he had felt in need of protection and was promptly moved to the appropriate wing. Monitors noted thorough, completed paperwork for those on the Talk to Me Strategy, with the numbers varying from time to time.

There remains limited support for those with addictions. The NHS service was under pressure and there did not seem to be any involvement of voluntary sector.

Monitors have commented on good levels of order and personal safety in the prison. On all monitoring visits, it has been reported to be a safe and well run establishment. Management have advised levels of drugs in the prison continue to be low, though there had been an increase in the production of 'hooch' which was being managed. IPMs were saddened to learn of a death in custody during the year.

Management continue to be proactive and diligent in maintaining high levels of safety and security in HMP Kilmarnock.

Standard 4: Effective, Courteous and Humane Use of Authority

● Overall RAG rating: Green

Monitors continued to report on a well-run prison which felt safe and orderly. IPMs were made to feel welcome and assisted by staff in dealing with prisoner requests and in making observations. The route was managed diligently and efficiently on a daily basis with certain population groups kept separate. Cell searches and sniffer dogs were routinely utilised in order to minimise prevalence of illicit substances. There were clear processes in place for maintaining security and order. The SRU had been visited frequently in the year and IPMs would commend staff for the work undertaken here in often challenging circumstances.

Standard 5: Respect, Autonomy and Protection

● Overall RAG rating: Green

Generally, prisoner complaints were dealt with in the timescale set. IPMs had occasionally been concerned about a lack of availability of PCF1 and 2 forms on the wings. They could be obtained on request to the staff. Even then forms may have run out and photocopying needed to be done. There was a perceived lack of confidentiality in this process and as a result some prisoners were reluctant to raise their concerns.

Broadly, IPMs reported good personal relationships between prisoners and staff in HMP Kilmarnock, though increasing numbers continued to present challenges in the level of detail in day to day interactions.

Standard 6: Purposeful Activity

● Overall RAG rating: Green

IPMs welcomed the increasing numbers of remand prisoners taking part in the regime. IPMs continue to comment on the very significant numbers of prisoners moving along the route to work and education this year, and commend HMP Kilmarnock on the number and range of opportunities currently on offer. In particular access to the gym seemed extensive for all prisoner groups with good attendance daily.

IPMs noted periods of inactivity in the establishment and a very limited regime for prisoners. This appears in part to have been due to a mixture of the ongoing transition from SERCO to SPS, staff training and staff sickness. Work parties, gym and education were all affected but access to health services and family visits were being prioritised and supported. For the majority of the year, IPMs reported on a functioning, working prison with access to recreation, education, exercise, faith based services and other activities for prisoners. There is perhaps some over concern a perceived lack of preventative work around addictions and wellbeing

Standard 7: Transitions from Custody into the Community

● Overall RAG rating: Green

Monitors were impressed that transitions into the community were particularly well managed. The Link Centre was proactive with involvement of housing and DWP. The Navigator service for parole prisoners was a good example of community links.

Long-term prisoners are well served by the ICM and RMT meetings, and timeous transitions to the Top End facilities and HMP Castle Huntly were reported. There did not appear to be any delays to First Grant Temporary Release.

IPMs received an update on levels of GEOAmev escort cancellations for prisoners, which remained high, and the impact on prisoners of this. The prison continued to facilitate escorts for cancelled external appointments where possible.

Standard 8: Organisational Effectiveness

● Overall RAG rating: Amber

Pressure on numbers of staff remained noticeable, with limited availability and cross cover between wings and areas to maintain adequate levels. At times IPMs were concerned at the staff's unfamiliarity with individual prisoners. On the whole staff morale appeared good around the impending changes, notwithstanding the issues around the TUPE transfer.

IPMs noted the prison regime was amended in late January and early February to support transition activity. Few work sheds were open and only essential work parties were active. However, management, staff and prisoners should be commended on the minimal impact thereafter on prisoners at HMP Kilmarnock, with all basic entitlements maintained during a period of significant change.

IPMs are sharply aware of the impact on prisoners of the escort contract with GeoAmev which has not functioned adequately throughout the year. This has impacted on Special Escorted Leave and prisoner progression. While IPMs welcome the mitigations that HMP Kilmarnock have attempted to put in place, these do not offset the problems associated with so many missed escorts to external appointments. Monitors have been advised of a slowly improving picture in the second half of this year.

Despite these challenges, IPMs noted staff in HMP Kilmarnock to be confident in their individual roles, with consistent communications and core messages from management supporting the stability of the prison on a day to day basis.

Standard 9: Health and Wellbeing

● Overall RAG rating: Amber

Over the year, IPMs remained concerned about staffing numbers, particularly in mental health with many vacant posts. However there were some signs of recovery in the service with more support from the management in Ayrshire and Arran Health Board.

The Monitoring Team have continued to highlight concerns around healthcare resources to attend to prisoners / patients in a decent and timely manner. Mental health provision and holistic programmes were under pressure from resourcing.

The PMC met with Healthcare Managers to receive feedback from a Mental Welfare Commission visit, which was broadly positive despite the resourcing challenges.

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

1. Increasing population
2. Healthcare
3. Cancellation of external appointments



Encouraging Observations

Purposeful activity levels were generally high for all categories of prisoner throughout the year.

Continuing improvements to safety and security across the establishments, including ongoing work to prevent the introduction of illicit substances to the establishment.

No major disruption to the day to day lives of prisoners in HMP Kilmarnock despite many changes arising from transition from Serco to NHS.



Conclusion

During the year the residential blocks and the separation and reintegration unit were visited on each of the weekly visits. In addition there were visits made to the Link Centre, Reception and Health Centre. There was good engagement with prisoners and staff.

On each visit the prison was calm and orderly, and interactions between staff and prisoners were observed to be conducted in a good humoured and courteous manner.

IPMs noted all of the encouraging observations and will continue to monitor the impact of the increasing population at HMP Kilmarnock and the associated challenges this brings.