



Independent Prison Monitoring (IPM) Findings Annual Report

Prison:

HMP DUMFRIES

Year (1 April – 31 March):

2024 – 2025

By Chris Collins



Annual Monitoring Figures*

		2023-24	2024-25
	Total number of visits	51	59
	Total number of missed weeks	2	8
	Total number of prisoner requests received	43	42
	Total number of IPM hours	184	126

Executive Summary

IPMs continued to report positively across all standards in HMP Dumfries. The team's impression was of a safe, orderly, innovative and well-run prison, with a strong culture of care for prisoners, and a staff group who take pride in their work. There were many individual examples of good practice highlighted by the team and the relationships between staff and prisoners were clearly very good, judging by the interactions observed. Some minor concerns remained around occasional closure of some parts of the regime, when staffing pressures were high.

General Observations

Standard 1: Lawful and Transparent Custody

IPMs visited reception and noted the process for admissions continued to be well-run and thorough. The area was clean, well-organised and informative for admissions. Processes for admissions contributed to an orderly environment. There were good supplies of additional clothing for prisoners arriving and leaving. Information was available for new prisoners via handbooks and a television presentation in the waiting area. Language services were available for foreign nationals and showering and toilet facilities were also available for admissions. IPMs were provided with an overview of prisoners released under emergency powers this year which had been well managed. Passmen were active and visible and keen to outline their role in the smooth running of the reception area.

IPMs frequently visited the basement at HMP Dumfries, where prisoners whose conduct had caused concern were held. The staff were professional, showed compassion and those in the unit seemed to be well cared for and looked after. IPMs commented that staff could not have been more accommodating and were on top of their work. IPMs confirmed all reasonable entitlements were in place for these prisoners.

Standard 2: Decency

IPMs visited the dining hall regularly this year. During the vast majority of visits the standard of food was generally good, with healthy options available. Indeed, prisoners remarked on the quality of food positively to IPMs. However, during a February visit concern was expressed about the standard of food and four separate prisoners approached IPMs to make this point. There have been no

requests to see IPMs about this since then and they have reported back on good quality provision and a varied menu.

IPMs visited all residential areas on almost every monitoring visit. The areas were clean, tidy and the staff were respectful and seemed to have very good relationships with prisoners. IPMs noted the potential disruption in moving gym classes to residential areas which was expertly managed. The new gymnasium is an asset to prisoners and staff.

Despite being an older building, the prison caters for the needs of all prisoners. Prisoners were afforded all basic entitlements and opportunities for fresh air and showers. The Wellbeing Gardens continued to be upgraded and utilised even further for a variety of events to improve rehabilitative provision in the prison, and IPMs commend all the prisoners and staff who worked to create this. More opportunities for time in green space and fresh air had been welcomed by prisoners.

Prisoners were observed on almost all visits taking time in the fresh air and showers were available on a daily basis. Industrial cleaners and passmen kept all areas of the prison clean and well maintained at all times.

Standard 3: Personal Safety

IPMs continued to report on good levels of safety in the prison, with good order observed in the establishment on all visits. Staff were professional and courteous on all observed interactions with prisoners, in work parties, route movement and in the residential areas.

Overall, and as reported last year, IPMs noted that management and staff took a preventative approach to personal safety in all areas of work. There was a strong culture of respect for others from the Governor and staff actively took pride in their work. These respectful relationships underpin the overarching feeling of a calm, orderly prison where prisoners can serve their sentence free from bullying or intimidation. Where challenging or difficult situations did arise, with individuals or groups of prisoners, SPS processes were adhered to with orderly rooms, complaints processes and Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) meetings all completed where necessary. IPMs welcomed senior management's dialogue on the prisoner requests that IPMs dealt with.

IPMs were updated on any significant incidents. IPMs were advised of a significant issue with use of illicit substances in B Hall in early 2025. It was a concern that 13 prisoners were being monitored after use of illicit substances.

Standard 4: Effective, Courteous and Humane Use of Authority

IPMs noted the route was managed professionally and safely at all points during the day. Drug testing and cell searches were reported to be carried out based on intelligence and at random. Where prisoners were on a rule or confined to their cell, plans were in place to reintegrate them back to mainstream. There was a high level of knowledge of the needs of all prisoners held at the prison, at all staff levels, contributing to a humane exercise of authority.

All IPMs spoke with prisoners in the basement who had previously been to orderly rooms for their conduct. All reasonable entitlements were in place for these prisoners and they were given opportunities to express themselves in the orderly room process. Plans were in place for them to return to mainstream.

Standard 5: Respect, Autonomy and Protection

IPMs commented at length about the good-natured relationships between prisoners and staff in HMP Dumfries. It came to IPMs attention, however, through several prisoners requests, that there

could occasionally be a healthy friction as staff and prisoners worked to reach satisfactory conclusions to individual issues. This is not a criticism but rather an acknowledgment of the willingness to have dialogue and address a wide range of matters.

IPMs spoke with some prisoners about the perceived impact of the new regime which they believe led to less time out of cell. Management advised that the new regime offers more opportunities for daily activities than before but are committed to monitoring this.

Standard 6: Purposeful Activity

IPMs noted that education had most rooms/classes occupied on recent visits, but that the number of prisoners attending varies. IPMs also observed education sessions taking place in B1 where several prisoners have limited mobility, demonstrating education outreach in practice.

IPMs observed an organised football tournament involving up to fifty prisoners and commented on a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere. There was an excellent timetable of themed days for prisoners throughout the year.

Work parties were reported to be taking place as usual with evidence of fruit and vegetables being grown to use in the prison.

IPMs visited Life Skills where various sessions had taken place and regularly visited the gym, where engagement was noted to be excellent with highly motivated instructors. They visited the joinery work shed also, which had an emphasis on producing furniture to be used in the community this year.

IPMs visited the mental health awareness event in the Wellbeing Gardens where thirty prisoners were involved in a session on mindfulness or physical activities including interaction with a therapy dog. Staff and prisoners were all noted to be cooperating to ensure a positive atmosphere. IPMs spoke at length with one prisoner who commented that being there made him feel more like a normal human being. IPMs commented that the whole event was most impressive, and staff too commented on how it had a tangible effect on the well-being of all concerned. Well over half the prison population were expected to participate in one aspect or another of mental health week.

Chaplains were visible throughout the year and available in the establishment. Faith-based services provision was good.

The processing of friends and family for visits session was excellent. IPMs observed members of the public being welcomed at the front gate and taken through security in a friendly but secure manner. Staff in the Visits Room were reported to be attentive but inobtrusive and the area itself was bright and welcoming.

Standard 7: Transitions from Custody into the Community

IPMs noted continued good links with statutory and voluntary agencies in the Dumfries and Galloway area to assist with resettlement and transition back to the community for liberated prisoners.

IPMs visited the Links Centre and Life Skills and noted the presence of community-based organisations and statutory services. There was an average of 15 to 20 attendees each morning and Mental Health and Addictions Nurses were regularly delivering appointments. IPMs observed the Recovery sessions for both short- and long-term prisoners. These were well attended and popular. These sessions are evidence-based and well facilitated and serve as excellent preparation for prisoners' liberation. IPMs spoke with the officers responsible for facilitating the Recovery Sessions in the Centre and welcomed this important work in assisting prisoners with their transition from custody to the community. The team reported on an innovative approach

within the prison when it came to engaging with the local community and various partnerships that have developed in the past year, notably in the Wellbeing Gardens and elsewhere. Where IPMs spoke with prisoners due for liberation they praised the level of attention that went into their release.

IPMs welcomed the reduction in missed external appointments and will continue to monitor this.

Standard 8: Organisational Effectiveness

IPMs noted that HMP Dumfries continued to run with good order and flexibility, with creative use of resources to ensure good opportunities for all categories of prisoner.

The IPM team noted some initial issues with the move to a 35-hour working week and some initial negative reactions from prisoners to the new regime. Generally though they reported an effective organisational structure and good communications at all levels.

There was no discernible pattern to the type of prisoner requests received during this reporting period. They ranged from food, access to visits, orderly room and punishment processes. Staff helped IPMs to address issues and progress these requests to the best of their ability.

As last year, IPMs reported on a well-functioning establishment with varying challenges. They praised the level of inter-departmental work and communication on key priorities and updates from senior management were very good. A recurring theme in this reporting period was 2-3 officers explaining they had been moved around for holiday/sickness cover which affected some elements of the regime.

Senior management had been very visible in the prison and effective and timely communication of alterations to prison regime or prison rules helped settle any anxieties among prisoners. Good practice and levels of service were consistently recognised by the management team.

Standard 9: Health and Wellbeing

IPMs continue to report on good levels of healthcare and adequate provision of staff for the needs of the population. IPMs took requests throughout the year, generally relating to medication prescribing decisions, which are outwith the parameters of the IPM role. The health centre is observed to be well maintained and fit to service the health needs of all prisoners.



Key Issues

1. Staffing / 35-hour week effect on the regime
2. Illicit substances, occasional spikes throughout the year



Encouraging Observations

Strong identity and culture of improvement in the prison, promoted from senior management throughout all staff in the establishment. Innovative approaches to health, wellbeing and recovery. Excellent partnerships and interface with local community.

* Data reconciliation currently taking place