



Independent Prison Monitoring (IPM) Findings Annual Report

Prison:

HMP GREENOCK

Year (1 April – 31 March):

2024 – 2025

By Chris Collins



Annual Monitoring Figures*

		2023-24	2024-25
	Total number of visits	55	60
	Total number of missed weeks	5	7
	Total number of prisoner requests received	22	22
	Total number of IPM hours	190	159

Executive Summary

HMP Greenock is a safe and well-run prison, with unique challenges owing to the fabric of an ageing building. IPMs noted good staff - prisoner relationships and excellent access to all basic entitlements, with some emerging population pressures. IPMs welcomed the excellent new Wellbeing Hub, and the classes provided within. The improvements to the progression pathway for National Top End prisoners continued this year and IPMs reported positively on a community facing prison, managed with friendly authority and sense of purpose.

General Observations

Standard 1: Lawful and Transparent Custody

The early release scheme was implemented well for those who were eligible. IPMs spoke with those prisoners who had been given liberation dates under the scheme and reported it very well handled. IPMs spoke with link centre staff about the prisoners identified for national induction throughout this year and were pleased to note that HMP Greenock had taken on board the recommendation from the last HMIPS inspection and allowed the prisoners a few days to settle in. Prisoners who were experiencing prison for the first time and attending the induction meeting, were invited to stay on after the meeting for an informal Q and A session. The induction provided a thorough and robust system, with very accessible paperwork.

IPMs consistently reported positively on reception, admissions and liberations processes at HMP Greenock. Staff were observed to work flexibly and in a friendly manner, while applying robust standards of practice. The admissions process was carried out in a bright, decent and clean environment. Access to external appointments had improved steadily throughout the year.

Prisoners were appropriately managed and cared for in line with good standards of equality, with all prisoners afforded the same basic entitlements, despite some emerging issues with population categories and different regimes later in the year.

Standard 2: Decency

IPMs monitored the process of the health centre being decanted to Bute House this year and noted the roof works are still ongoing. Monitors observed all prisoners being taken to and from

health appointments and commented on the challenges being managed admirably by NHS and prison staff.

The establishment was very clean with all essentials available to prisoners to live in a tidy and hygienic manner. The fabric of the building notwithstanding, HMP Greenock was an establishment where every effort was made to ensure prisoners could serve their sentence with dignity in a decent and humane environment. Despite some challenges around timings of the regime, all basic entitlements of time in the fresh air and an offer of daily shower were upheld for all categories of prisoner. Towards the end of the reporting year various prisoners in Ailsa Hall spoke to IPMs about what they perceive to be very small portion sizes of food at lunch and dinner. IPMs will continue to monitor this.

IPMs observed prisoners on Talk to Me processes and noted a humane response to observations, with all appropriate support and entitlements facilitated. Monitors observed visits sessions at various times of the day and week for all categories of prisoners and noted the courteous professional way that families, children and friends were welcomed into the establishment. The visits room has been upgraded for children and families and is a very welcoming environment.

Standard 3: Personal Safety

Prisoners generally remarked to IPMs that HMP Greenock was a safe place to serve their sentence. There were however ongoing issues around protection prisoners being housed along with mainstream prisoners and the challenges it presented for both officers and protection prisoners.

IPMs reported a well-run and orderly prison with good systems and practices in place to address challenges as they arise. On some visits this year, however, reference was made by staff to problematic use of illicit substances in various parts of the establishment. This at times had resulted in an unusual number of prisoners going through Orderly Room disciplinary processes or having to be carefully monitored for adverse reactions to drugs under the Management of Offenders at Risk Due to Any Substance (MORS) policy.

Emergency and contingency plans for serious incidents were in place; however, the unsuitable nature of the building and potential for damage in bad weather makes planning for all eventualities difficult.

Standard 4: Effective, Courteous and Humane Use of Authority

IPMs commented on a relaxed environment in all areas of the prison where friendly authority was maintained by staff. Where instances of misconduct, substance misuse, violence or intimidation did occur, appropriate processes were in place, in line with prison rules, to manage these in an effective manner. When IPMs checked, prisoners who had to be held separately under Rule 95 had been offered their basic entitlements.

IPMs reported that the route was managed effectively, and different population groups kept apart where necessary. IPMs noted the ongoing challenges associated with different population groups in the prison but sought and were given reassurances that all efforts were made to offer maximum time out of cell while comprehensively managing risk.

Standard 5: Respect, Autonomy and Protection

The general relationships between staff and prisoners were positive throughout the establishment. IPMs reported a calm and orderly prison on almost all visits. Officers had a good working

knowledge of all prisoners in their care, as did the senior management team, who were extremely responsive to IPMs raising matters throughout the reporting year.

Relationships across the prison were good and staff were observed to treat prisoners with decency and dignity. Officers operated with a clear sense of purpose and understanding of their individual roles and how they linked with other areas of the prison and the overall priorities of the establishment. Prisoner Information Action Committees (PIACs) were held in the halls, which gave prisoners the opportunity to express their views on issues that concerned them. IPMs reported swift communication with those in the National Top End and improvements in their progression pathway. Inductions were held in the Links Centre with appropriate literature and information for those beginning their sentence. As last year, prisoners have spoken with IPMs about discrepancy in wages in work parties across the prison and there remains concern about the cost of living and rising canteen prices for prisoners.

Standard 6: Purposeful Activity

The Wellbeing Hub continued to provide a range of classes with excellent levels of engagement and therapeutic interventions. As in previous reports, IPMs commend staff and prisoners for their commitment to this new resource in HMP Greenock. Prisoners had been involved in naming it “The Oak”, after the oak tree present in the Greenock town’s coat of arms. Another prisoner had created an acronym from OAK to read: Opportunity, Acceptance, Kindness. IPMs commented on a varied therapeutic timetable and excellent uptake from prisoners for these classes. They welcomed the proactive approach, enthusiasm and evidence-based knowledge that has delivered this initiative. There is an opportunity to attract more female prisoners into some classes and IPMs will continue to monitor this.

IPMs welcomed the introduction of the re-labelling work party, with nearly 200,000 bottles of handwash sent to an African-based charity. Individuals in this work party were clear on its purpose and welcomed the opportunity to work there.

All the work sheds had been open at various times during the year, but the numbers were variable. Staff sickness continued to cause problems here as when cover was required in residential areas work sheds were forced to close. IPMs monitored in the laundry and gymnasium frequently throughout this period. There was a good allocation of tasks and supervising officers maintained a positive atmosphere and order.

All categories of prisoners were positive about the gym and new equipment arrived in this reporting year. The gym was very clean with the passman freshening all the equipment after use. Gym timetabling however was very challenging as there were four separate populations to be managed. Protection prisoners advised IPMs they would prefer more weekday sessions. Some gym equipment was available to protection prisoners in their recreation area, but this space was unsuitable and could be crowded.

IPMs spoke with prisoners in education - art, IT literacy and numeracy - everyone was engaged and enjoying their work. Male and female prisoners spoke well of education and the prison more generally. IPMs noted there was a good variety within education with several prisoners doing two courses in one day. Painting work parties in the residential halls provided additional work. IPMs have also spoken to pantry workers in Ailsa dining area; again they were positive about their work party and the prison generally.

The hairdressers and the bike sheds were visited weekly or biweekly, although the latter frequently had very small numbers of prisoners working. IPMs commented on a very positive picture of activity, with caveats about staffing and occasional cancellations. They observed all essential work parties in operation, and a fair allocation of tasks, and received good feedback from prisoners in other activities, including the Links Centre.

Standard 7: Transitions from Custody into the Community

The process of sentence progression continued to be a challenge for both staff and prisoners at HMP Greenock, and IPMs noted the National Top End expanded in size towards the end of this reporting year. However, the IPM team were pleased to report an improving picture for those in Chriswell House, with good communication between HMP Greenock and SPS HQ enabling quicker and more informed decisions to be made. IPMs heard reports of better communication, improved timescales for First Grant of Temporary Release (FGTR), and quicker turnaround of Risk Management Team decisions. This was very welcome progress, and IPMs will continue to monitor Chriswell House and its increased population.

Prisoners in Chriswell spoke positively about work placements, including one at the local football club Greenock Morton. There is currently little evidence of the log jam in FGTRs noted a year or more ago.

IPMs reported on a community facing prison, with good, established links with services across Inverclyde and beyond. IPMs noted good provision and motivated staff in the Links Centre but would hope for a greater presence from external agencies if possible. IPMs observed prisoner liberations and noted good feedback from prisoners about their time spent in HMP Greenock. Staff spent time with prisoners being released, asking about future plans and wishing them well for the future as they met family and retrieved their property.

IPMs were pleased to report more positively than last year on the reduced number of external appointments being cancelled. This issue had not affected Special Escorted Leave and prisoner progression as much as last year. IPMs also continued to welcome the mitigations that HMP Greenock attempted to put in place.

Standard 8: Organisational Effectiveness

Independent Prison Monitors continued to report on a staff group with a clear understanding of their remit, who carried out their duties well. Pockets of good practice were identified and recognised, and innovation welcomed, as evidenced in the creation of the Wellbeing Hub this year. The regime was maintained through the considerable flexibility displayed by the staff group, which was a strength of the establishment. However, management acknowledged that borrowing staff from one part of the prison to service another contributes to uncertainty for staff and prisoners alike.

The application process for progression in non-complex cases was improving. From senior management down, IPMs reported a clear focus on improving timescales and communication and timeous engagement with SPS HQ.

Monitors commented positively on a positive culture within HMP Greenock that sought to broaden rather than limit what was possible, despite some obvious and permanent challenges. It was a prison with consistent leadership and a willingness to continuously improve.

Standard 9: Health and Wellbeing

IPMs observed ongoing appointments in the decanted health centre in Bute House and the professional attitude of staff, who were positive about the temporary arrangements including the extra space and generally good ambience.

IPMs visited the Health Centre throughout this year and observed adequate staffing for the demands and health needs of the population, with occasional pressures resulting from substance misuse. Waiting times were reasonable and the standard of care offered appeared very good. Rarely do IPMs receive requests from prisoners relating to healthcare. There were very good relationships

between SPS and NHS staff at HMP Greenock, and issues and challenges were resolved as they arose. IPMs look forward to the restoration of the Health Centre in the main building.



Key Issues

1. Decency and fabric of building
2. Purposeful Activity
3. Progression



Encouraging Observations

Relationships between staff and prisoners were generally very good. The establishment of the OAK Wellbeing Hub was an excellent innovation for HMP Greenock. Progression pathways and timelines continued to improve. Improvements to the children and families section of the visits room were very welcome.

* Data reconciliation currently taking place