



Independent Prison Monitoring (IPM) Findings Annual Report

Prison:

HMP KILMARNOCK

Year (1 April – 31 March):

2024 – 2025

By Chris Collins



Annual Monitoring Figures*

		2023-24	2024-25
	Total number of visits	53	57
	Total number of missed weeks	4	4
	Total number of prisoner requests received	91	93
	Total number of IPM hours	222	202

Executive Summary

As last year, IPMs 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 daily for both convicted and remand prisoners.

The new regime was noted to be very tight, with the potential for cancelled activities or reduced mealtimes or time in the fresh air if staffing was low. However, management were aware and monitoring this daily.

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

General Observations

Standard 1: Lawful and Transparent Custody

IPMs visited the Separation and Reintegration Unit (SRU) and continue to report on a well-run unit with good care and all basic entitlements afforded to prisoners in their care. Monitors observed staff moving prisoners in and out of cells with patience and respect.

IPMs noted reception was particularly busy throughout this reporting period. IPMs visited reception frequently while staff were preparing for admissions and commented on a small, but helpful staff team who were courteous to IPMs and treated new admissions with a friendly respect. Monitors routinely noted the reception area to be clear and tidy.

The Insiders service of peer support from existing prisoners to new admissions was an excellent initiative, but availability of insiders was variable.

Two days a week were allocated for induction, with two sessions for protection and two for mainstream. Access to induction therefore depended on the day of week the prisoner was admitted and could vary from two to six days. Some individuals new to the prison system reported delays in receiving induction, though IPMs have not established whether such delays were regular or not.

Standard 2: Decency

There was evidence in all the halls of passmen at work cleaning the areas, and overall, the prison appeared clean as did the corridors to the work sheds and work areas.

There was a robust system to replace bedding. IPMs were advised that some mattresses were very worn, but orders had been put in for renewal. IPMs will continue to monitor. The high population continued to cause some day-to-day issues with general maintenance.

The IPM team remained concerned at the level of cell sharing and high population. IPMs continued to report on cells which were of an inadequate size for two people and the lack of privacy for using the shared toilet was undignified. IPMs recognised the pressure on the prison, and that cell sharing was not their preferred option. Increasing pressures in the prison population increase the use of cell sharing. IPMs will continue to monitor, in particular, the cell sharing risk assessment process.

IPMs spoke to a sizeable number of prisoners in both houseblocks who complained about the standard of food since the transition, both in quality and portion size. Some commented that individuals were having to supplement their three meals a day by buying additional food from the canteen. Monitors welcomed the detailed responses and actions taken by management to ensure good food provision.

The kitchen was noted to be clean and in very good order, with appropriate temperature checks and safety measures in place. IPMs noted variable numbers in the kitchen work party from day to day and will continue to monitor.

Standard 3: Personal Safety

Generally, IPMs were told that prisoners feel safe this year, with some exceptions. There were several prisoner requests taken by the IPM relating to individuals' location and categorisation within the prison. When explored by monitors, staff were able to provide evidence of appropriate risk assessment processes, however the pressure of an increased population appears to have generated some issues.

IPMs noted thorough, completed paperwork for those on the Talk to Me strategy, with the numbers varying from time to time. Prison management provided updates on levels of illicit substances, which continued to be relatively low, and on significant incidents which were appropriately managed.

The IPMs' strong impression is of an establishment with security as a key priority. They have commented throughout the year about good levels of order and personal safety and reported a safe and well-run establishment from monitoring visits. As noted in last year's report, 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

IPMs visited the SRU frequently throughout this reporting year. The unit was noted to be clean, with TV and phones, and IPMs noted it was clear from the office whiteboard who had been offered showers and exercise. IPMs observed senior managers making their daily visit. IPMs concluded that the SRU at HMP Kilmarnock offered a safe environment and, where possible, an appropriate regime.

IPMs noted a new regime has now been put in place across the prison. Both staff and prisoners commented that the new timetable was very tight; if there were delays in the route or cell count, meal and recreation time might be reduced.

At all times 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 daily with certain population groups kept separate. Cell searches and earlier in the year sniffer dogs were routinely utilised to minimise prevalence of illicit substances. There were clear processes in place for maintaining security and order.

Standard 5: Respect, Autonomy and Protection

IPMs observed respectful interactions between staff and prisoners during recreation and escorted movements through the prison. In two instances IPMs especially reported hall staff demonstrating their level of awareness and concern for two individuals and providing good support.

Although the new regime based on the adjusted working hours has been established, it is tightly packed. Choices have to be made between work or gym, visits or health care, work or education. Management have informed IPMs they are aware of this, and further adjustments may need to be made.

In conversations with a sample of prisoners, they indicated they were having to submit several Prisoner Complaint Forms (PCFs) due to loss/ non-arrival of forms. They were not able to photocopy forms to keep a record. The regularity and consistency of these comments suggests that there may be a problem that the prison needs to address.

Generally, prisoner complaints were dealt with according to the set timescale. IPMs had occasionally been concerned about a lack of availability of PCF1 and 2 forms on the wings. They could be obtained on request, but this brought about a perceived lack of confidentiality in the 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

IPMs observed work sheds throughout the reporting period, all of which had a full number of prisoners working. Hall passmen were also in evidence cleaning the halls.

The gym has been busy on all monitoring visits with football regularly taking place on the outside pitch. The exercise yards on the wings were also noted to be open for the post lunch access to fresh air. IPMs have observed small classes in education and access to library where copies of the prison reports available. IPMs spoke at length to the Imam chaplain during their visits to the prison. There is currently a range of services on offer from the chaplaincy including regular religious services for those who wish to take part. The numbers attending these sessions was steady and they seemed to be of comfort to those attending. The chaplain also outlined their practices with respect to induction, making sure that they visited each new prisoner to discuss what is available to them and to offer them what support they can within their remit.

IPMs continued to report on high numbers of remand prisoners taking part in the regime. As with last year, IPMs continue to comment on the very significant numbers of prisoners moving along the route to work and education and commend HMP Kilmarnock on the number and range of opportunities currently on offer. Access to the gym seemed especially impressive with extensive opportunities for all prisoner groups with good attendance daily.

Standard 7: Transitions from Custody into the Community

IPMs visited the Links Centre throughout the year and noted a good interface between the prison and local communities with various agencies engaged in pre-liberation and resettlement work. It was notable that IPMs received a very low number of requests in relation to transitions from custody and progression at HMP Kilmarnock.

Long-term prisoners were well served by the Integrated Case Management (ICM) and Risk Management Team (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 welcomed the reduction in cancellation of external appointments throughout the year

Standard 8: Organisational Effectiveness

IPMs reported that although staffing numbers appeared adequate on the wings, many of the officers were covering different areas and so were not so well informed about prisoners. Although not affecting the basic delivery of care, safety and order, this made it more challenging for officers to respond to individual concerns.

IPMs attended the Equality and Diversity meetings which started after the transition of the prison from Serco to SPS. Senior management team, staff and NHS representatives were present.

On the whole staff morale appeared good, despite the daily 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

IPMs reported a positive feel about health care this reporting year, perhaps reflecting some improved staffing but also team work to redesign some aspects of the service

The provision of in cell medication had been trialled at Kilmarnock this year. All cells have locked safes for medicines so many more prisoners control their own medicine intake, receiving a month's supply at a time, with some exceptions for opiates and unreliable behaviour. This has reduced supervised medicine rounds in each houseblock. IPMs noted this is good for releasing staff time and for prisoners taking responsibility.

IPMs were advised of some therapeutic / preventative work with comforters distributed to prisoners with anxiety, self-harm issues. This has been funded by a charity. They are small plastic objects, hand sized and have proven very popular with prisoners who feel it makes a difference.

IPMs welcomed health staff presence in the halls, where prisoners can discuss matters without an appointment. The team recognised that sometimes appointments are requested where all that is required is some reassurance.

Over the year, IPMs remained concerned about staffing numbers, particularly in mental health but welcome all of the improvements made in many areas of the service.



Key Issues

1. Increasing population
2. Food provision



Encouraging Observations

Purposeful activity levels were generally high for all categories of prisoner throughout the year.
Safety and security very strong across the establishment.

* Data reconciliation currently taking place