

Independent Prison Monitoring (IPM) Findings Annual Report





Prison:
HMP SHOTTS

Year (1 April – 31 March):
2024 – 2025

By: HM INSPECTORATE OF PRISONS FOR SCOTLAND



Annual Monitoring Figures

		2023/24	2024/25
	Total number of visits:	61	77
	Total number of missed weeks:	0	0
	Total number of prisoner requests received:	69	70
	Total number of IPM hours:	242.5	256

Executive Summary

This report is informed by Independent Prison Monitors (IPMs) findings during visits and speaking with residents, staff, and senior management, with consideration to the nine HMIPS monitoring and inspection standards. The IPM Team ensured there was at least one visit each week as per the legislation and dealt with seventy requests received via the IPM Freephone service.

There were significant and ongoing efforts to address the challenges faced, including navigating the move to the SPS 35-hour working week and regime review and alignment. Staff shortages were a particular challenge early in the year, which had affected staffing consistency and the regime, and although not completely resolved, senior management efforts resulted in a reduction of absences which had settled by the end of the year with ongoing management review. For much of the year concerns centred around illicit substances and items and the associated effects of an increased, but fluctuating number of instances of those managed under MORS and prison rule 95.

Despite these challenges there was progress made in many aspects with clear leadership, prioritisation, enhanced communication, and significant efforts to deliver improvements to the day-to-day operation of the establishment.

General Observations

Standard 1: Lawful and Transparent Custody

The reception processes demonstrated robust well-established admission and property handling procedures, including a reception risk assessment, and staff clearly communicated information to residents as they arrived and departed. All new admissions to the prison were moves from another establishment, i.e. no admissions direct from court, and other movements through reception were transfers and external appointments etc. Reception and healthcare staff both highlighted ongoing issues with GEOAmey prisoner transport – see Standard 9.

The number of people released directly from HMP Shotts is lower than many other establishments due to the nature of the prison. The Link Centre Officer, a single person post, led one-to-one support regards to inductions, progression, and release providing. The person-centred tailored support they offered to residents, and their families, demonstrated good practice.

A copy of the prison rules was easily accessible in both Lamont and Allanton on request from staff. In Lamont it was noted there was one copy of the prison rules for all four flats. Although delays in being provided a copy had not been raised, IPMs recommended the prison consider having one copy per flat in Lamont.

Standard 2: Decency

Both internal and external areas of the prison were clean and well maintained. There had been a significant focus by the prison on improving standards in relation to cleanliness across all areas.

This included the introduction of a more focused industrial cleaning party. IPMs noted areas were regularly cleaned and cleaning materials and products were accessible for residents to clean their cells. The results of management focus on this were evident and reported by IPMs.

The cells were single-occupancy and maintained in good condition, including the toilet and shower facilities. There were adequate personal hygiene supplies provided by the prison, and residents could purchase alternative products through the canteen. Laundry services worked well, and no issues or concerns were raised with IPMs during the year.

The prison faced ongoing challenges providing healthy nutritious meals within a restricted budget. IPMs heard from residents that there had been improvements, although there could be further improvements e.g. for those on alternative menus for health and religious reasons. Overall, there were improvements and ongoing commitment by senior management, who had requested a recovery plan and improvement timescales from catering.

Standard 3: Personal Safety

The prison environment was generally calm and perceived as safe, with residents engaging positively with staff. However, concerns about substance use increased during the year. In the second half, there was an increase in the number of people held under [Prison Rule 95](#) (removal from association), attributed to violence, mental health issues, and erratic behaviour (see standard 4). Population levels across the prison estate made it difficult to move people to other areas to ensure safety and good order leading to more Rule 95 cases being managed in Lamont and Allanton halls. The establishment was aware of this and ensured all individuals were offered a daily review.

Risk management processes, including Talk to Me (TTM) and Management of an Offender Suspected to Be at Risk due to the ingestion of a Substance (MORS), were in place. There had been an increase in the number of people on MORS, which correlated with concerns regarding substance use. IPMs reported that management and front-line staff, including healthcare, did all they could to keep residents safe and raised awareness about substance use including a harm reduction week, with key messages for residents, and naloxone training for staff. Residents felt there had been a marked improvement in addiction/recovery support which recognised the focus of senior management and exceptional work from the support and wellbeing team. They worked with external partners, introduced new support initiatives, and developed plans with a wider perspective on recovery support and wellbeing.

In acknowledgment of substance use concerns a new Problem Assessment Group (PAG) protocol was trialled at HMP Shotts (and HMP Edinburgh). This was to help ensure an effective and coordinated response to any incidents, with high risks escalated to a SPS national level.

IPMs reported that staff were knowledgeable and confident in the procedures for bullying and/or harassments and such situations were dealt with sensitively and confidentially, reported and escalated, as necessary.

Standard 4: Effective, Courteous and Humane Use of Authority

As reported last year, and similarly across the wider prison estate, there were concerns regarding the length of time some individuals were held in Separation and Reintegration Unit (SRU) which reflected aspects of the 2023 [HMIPS thematic review of segregation in Scottish prisons](#). However, SRU staff managed the unit well, demonstrated considerable knowledge of their roles and of those in their care observed by IPMs. During the year the prison experienced an increase in those held on Prison Rule 95, (see standards 3 and 6). Given the national prison population crisis and difficulty relocating people to other areas this resulted in an increased use of Prison Rule 95(11) and more instances of people held under rule 95 with both Allanton and Lamont.

Security measures to enhance safety included a body scanner in reception used to identify and track contraband being brought into the prison. Residents were provided with information regarding the body scanner via the Prisoner Information Channel (PIC). The prison also had Rapiscan machines to test items and substances seized. Processes were robust for quarterly cell searches and intelligence led searches bolstered by coordinated work by security and the intelligence management unit. IPMs welcomed the national security measure protocols at front of house in terms of searching all staff and visitors which the management monitored.

Given the long-term sentenced nature of the prison the volume of property could be higher per person when compared with other establishments and reception had a robust property process. No issues or concerns were raised about property during the year.

Standard 5: Respect, Autonomy and Protection from Mistreatment

In general, relationships were good and IPMs observed positive interactions through respectful and supportive conversations. There were regular Prisoner Information Action Committees (PIACs) and consultation, and enhanced communications to ensure resident views and ideas were taken into consideration and to keep residents informed.

For most of the year there was open association within the halls from around 8am-5.30pm, for those who did not attend/were not assigned work and other opportunities out with the halls such as education, the gym, recovery, and wellbeing offering etc. A new regime was implemented in December 2024, following consultation with residents and staff to inform a regime review and align with SPS moving to a 35-hour working week. The new regime sought to maximise and encourage attendance and engagement in meaningful activities out with the halls. Staff absences occasionally led to work shed closures as staff were redeployed to provide residential cover, however management continuously reviewed staffing to minimise the impact. IPMs observed ongoing improvements, reflecting senior management efforts and a more stable staffing position.

There was a lack of confidence in the complaints system, similar to other establishments. Management took the lack of confidence seriously, commissioning a review of the complaints system during the year and taking immediate action on issues identified. There was focused monitoring by IPMs during February and March 2025 on this issue, speaking with forty-three residents, seventeen residential staff, and four managers, and overall findings shared with senior management. Management welcomed the work undertaken by IPMs, took time to consider their findings, and were clearly committed to making improvements within Shotts and in line with the national policy. HMIPS have previously reported the SPS complaints system does not follow model practice as advised by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman and should be reviewed by the SPS headquarters as a matter of urgency.

Standard 6: Purposeful Activity

The prison offered diverse work opportunities — gardening, laundry, catering, cleaning, woodwork, metal fabrication, textiles, biking, and occupational sheds — and employed pass men in residential halls, the education centre, and the gym. Workers took pride in their jobs, welcomed the time out of the halls and the routine it gave them. Staffing shortages occasionally affected some work sheds, though efforts were made to minimise disruptions – see Standard 5.

There were no issues or concerns raised regarding daily access to fresh air. Management and staff must be commended for their efforts in ensuring all legal entitlements were fulfilled, including access to fresh air, given the fluctuating but increased use of prison rule 95 within Lamont and Allanton (see standard 3 and 4).

The number attending Education increased, providing various classes including IT, music, art, and supporting students with Open University studies. A small team of residents edit, design, and

produce the STIR magazine which showcases artwork, poems, and creative writing by others across the prison estate. Education also worked collaboratively with others to create content for the PICS channel, including information for recovery month, information about the Open Estate (HMP Castle Huntly), Learning Centre information, and services including NHS, the Hub, and the TAB.

Vocational qualification opportunities included Performing Manufacturing Operations, Textile Care, RTITB (Forklift training), Woodwise, Velotech (bike shed), Fire Awareness, Manual Handling and British Institute of Cleaning Services. The gym was also popular with good attendance and equipment.

The support and wellbeing team continued efforts around recovery support and worked collaboratively with education, the PICS channel, and external partners. Opportunities ranged from a recovery café and Cocaine/Alcohol Anonymous meetings to yoga Nidra and mindfulness.

Significant effort had gone into promoting and enhancing visits and family contact by staff and partners, reflective of the family strategy. The visitors' waiting area and visit room were good environments, had a positive vibe, and the staff/visitor/resident relationships were excellent. Family members also appreciated that the Governor had attended visits from time to time and spoke to family members. They had not experienced that elsewhere and had felt they were invested in caring for their family member. Children's visits were popular, and staff were creative in making the experience as natural and fun as possible including a Halloween party, Christmas Panto, and new opportunities, such as Healthy Dads Healthy Kids following its success when run at HMP Barlinnie.

Standard 7: Transition from Custody into the Community

There is a national concern around progression and programmes. Advice was issued by SPS headquarters to all establishments in November 2024 with a new approach to programmes, with some programmes suspended as national waiting lists were at a critical level. The new approach was at an early stage, but further evidences the concerns highlighted in the [2024 HMIPS progression thematic review](#).

However, programme delivery remained a priority at HMP Shotts which was commended. They were the only establishment to deliver Constructs, Discovery, and Pathways in the last 3 years. The programmes team had a clear focus on work to support progression, delivering the Self Change Programme (SCP) and Discovery Programme, 1:1 interventions and Generic Programme Assessment (GPA). During 2024/25 sixty-two residents completed SCP, Discovery Programme, Pathways, and 1:1 interventions and 146 cases discussed by the Programme Case Management Board. In the absence of detailed guidance from SPS headquarters on the new approach to programmes significant efforts were made locally by case management and multi-disciplinary teams to pull together accurate data and information to enable case reviews and targeted advice.

The number of people released directly from HMP Shotts to the community was lower than other establishments due to the nature of the prison, which only held those serving sentences over four years. For the few people that were released directly into the community the Links Centre Officer provided support and pastoral care also provided one-to-one support to help people prepare to transition into the community.

Standard 8: Organisational Effectiveness

There was clear leadership and prioritisation to address key areas of concern demonstrated through targeted efforts to address issues and enhance the overall performance. Steps were taken to mitigate the impact of longstanding staff shortages, which had previously affected operations. Although this challenge has not been completely resolved, the overall number of long-term

absences has decreased, positively influencing operations, and management continued to monitor and address ongoing challenges.

In July, a monthly team brief from the Governor was implemented which recognised staff feedback and demonstrated management were listening and making every effort to support staff, keep them updated on priorities, progress, and recognise their work. Many staff praised these efforts and felt listened to. Consultations were held with staff to inform plans to transition to the 35-hour working week, and with residents on the regime review.

There were also significant efforts to address concerns regarding illicit substances and items, referred to in Standard 3, and around intervention programmes, referred to in Standard 7. The harm reduction week included a training session for residential staff, delivered by the Scottish Ambulance Service, around emerging drug concerns and the SPS response to that. This also incorporated naloxone training and staff feedback was incredibly positive. A body scanner had been installed in reception to enhance the security and safety of the establishment. Two staff attended a 'train the trainer' course and trained other reception staff in its use and held an awareness session to increase knowledge and awareness of the new equipment with the wider staff group.

Several staff talked about being highly supported by senior management. They felt there was a culture conducive to raising and discussing concerns and that improved communication had provided a clearer picture of the work of others and the strategic direction and priorities. Staff training days helped staff learn about different elements of the regime and develop a consistent approach to the day-to-day routine and operational practices.

Standard 9: Health and Wellbeing

Reception and healthcare staff both spoke about GEOAmey prisoner transportation, which was an ongoing issue. Although improvements in the GEOAmey service were acknowledged, concerns remained about missed hospital appointments due to delays or cancellations by GEOAmey. Healthcare staff proactively coordinated with the hospital to advocate on behalf of residents who missed their appointments through no fault of their own.

Some residents felt there was a lack of focus on general wellbeing, such as weight management, feeling run down etc. Processes existed to help those who sought support on such issues via triage slips to discuss with healthcare professionals. Mental wellbeing support was also available, and residents could self-refer, or staff could submit a referral form on behalf of residents.

A healthcare clinic and dispensing of medication by a senior nurse was observed by an IPM who reported there was good engagement with residents, respectful relationships, and the clinic was a calm and well-run environment.

Healthcare staffing had improved, although still experienced challenges not dissimilar to wider healthcare services elsewhere in the estate and in the community; however, bank nursing staff were utilised where possible with recruitment campaigns undertaken.



Key Issues

1. Substance use and recovery support
2. Staffing
3. Regime



Encouraging Observations

There was good evidence of the prison making improvements over the last year, from improving standards in relation to cleanliness in all areas of the prison and meal provisions, to implementation of a new regime following consultation and taking the lack of confidence in the SPS complaints system seriously.

Many of the challenges related to substance use, staff absences and/or national population concerns. Senior management were aware of the issues and took positive steps to address long-term staff absences, which had stabilised. They had also enhanced the support available in relation to harm reduction and delivery of offender outcomes programmes and interventions to support sentence progression.

The commitment and willingness of many staff to drive improvements was evident, with clear leadership, prioritisation, and communication.