HMIPS

HM INSPECTORATE OF PRISONS FOR SCOTLAND

Independent Prison Monitoring (IPM) Findings

Annual Report

Prison:
LILIAS CENTRE

Year (1 April – 31 March):
2025 – 2026

INVESTING IN VOLUNTEERS

npm national preventive mechanism

Annual Monitoring Figures

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Total number of visits:	53	53	57
Total number of missed weeks:	1	0	1
Total number of prisoner requests received:	0	0	0
Total number of IPM hours:	119	112	125

Executive Summary

This report presents findings from Independent Prison Monitoring (IPM) at the Lilias Centre between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026. Monitoring activity was carried out regularly throughout the year and provides an overview of the experiences and observations of IPMs there.

Overall, the Lilias Centre was observed operating as a stable, calm, and supportive environment, underpinned by strong personal and trauma-informed attitudes. Evidence throughout the reporting year indicated that prisoners felt safe, respected, and supported, with positive and constructive relationships between staff and prisoners. These relationships contributed significantly to the calm atmosphere observed and were fundamental to the centres' operation.

The environment was maintained to a good standard, with clean and well-kept accommodation and communal areas supporting a sense of dignity and wellbeing. The daily routine reflected a clear emphasis on promoting independence and personal responsibility, with flexibility enabling prisoners to exercise autonomy and engage in decision-making about how to spend their time. While this was initially challenging for some, most prisoners reported that they adjusted well and valued the independence afforded to them.

A varied programme of activity was available, including education, work, physical activity and therapeutic opportunities. Engagement levels were positive, and prisoners felt that what they were able to do contributed to their wellbeing, confidence, and personal development. Progress was made in education provision, with the provision of IT for educational purposes which had previously been a longstanding gap. Family contact was also well supported through flexible and inclusive arrangements, contributing positively to maintaining relationships and emotional connection.

Prisoners reported good access to healthcare and therapeutic support, complemented by a range of wellbeing-focused activities. This was delivered in partnership with NHS and third sector organisations supporting immediate needs and longer-term personal development.

Arrangements for progression and transition into the community were structured and supportive, with prisoners generally reporting that they felt prepared for release. However, a recurring theme was prisoners' perception of limited clarity around progression pathways, including criteria, timescales, and access to community opportunities. While processes were in place, greater transparency and communication at an individual level would enhance understanding.

Some challenges identified during the reporting year related to the centre's dependence on HMP & YOI Stirling. These included delays in implementing aspects of the intended regime, such as the introduction of in-person community food shopping and the relocation of canteen provision. In addition, gaps in information provided to prisoners prior to transfer and the absence of fully developed local guidance materials were noted as areas where improvements would strengthen the overall experience. These issues did not undermine the generally positive environment but highlighted areas where ongoing development and coordination are required.

Overall, the Lilias Centre demonstrated effective leadership and a clear commitment to continuous improvement. Partnership working was well embedded and contributed positively to service delivery and outcomes for the women living there.

General Observations

Standard 1: Lawful and Transparent Custody

Arrangements for lawful and transparent custody were mostly effective. Prisoners typically had a clear understanding of their sentence status and key dates, and induction experiences were largely positive and supportive.

Access to information about rights and entitlements was supported through national materials such as the Prison Rules and the provision of a plain English guide to the prison rules, 'Your Rights Under the Scottish Prison Rule,' booklet published by SPS in July 2025. Prisoners felt a concise, Lilias specific written guide which they could keep and refer to would better support their understanding of Lilias and their opportunities for progression.

Some prisoners reported inaccurate or misleading information in the closed estate. For example, information had not accurately reflected the reduced weekly food shopping budget which changed in March 2025, and progression routes were unclear. These inconsistencies highlighted the importance of accurate, up-to-date information across the estate. Further work could be done to improve the information available about Lilias and Bella in the closed estate.

Liberation processes were managed well, with prisoners consistently reporting feeling supported and informed. Prisoners nearing release reported that arrangements had been discussed with them, and they had been supported by their Personal Officers. Liberations observed by IPMs were calm and supportive, with staff and peers gathering in communal spaces to give those leaving a warm send off, which was welcomed by those being released.

Standard 2: Decency

Accommodation and communal areas at Lilias were clean, well maintained, and appropriate for the needs of the prisoners there. Bedrooms, bedding, and laundry arrangements were reported by prisoners to be satisfactory.

Prisoners were supported to manage their own weekly food shopping budget and prepare meals, supporting independence and life skills. House kitchens were well equipped for food storage and preparation. Communal cooking activities supporting learning were regularly observed by IPMs and positively received by prisoners.

Delays in introducing in-person weekly food shopping in the community and relocating canteen provisions were reported by both prisoners and staff.

Personal hygiene provisions were accessible, either provided by SPS or available to purchase through the canteen. Some limitations in the range of products, particularly cosmetics and skin-care items suitable for a diverse population were noted, however staff took steps to source suitable products. While processes existed to request alternatives, awareness and consistency of practice could be improved.

Overall, living conditions were good, further improvements in inclusivity and communication on arrangements would strengthen practice under this standard.

Standard 3: Personal Safety

Monitoring evidence indicated that Lilias was a safe environment for prisoners. IPMs observed and were told of calm, measured responses for prisoners experiencing distress, with supportive conversations used to defuse situations and address concerns.

Behavioural expectations were clear from the outset, reinforced by house rules agreed between prisoners. An anti-bullying approach was embedded, and staff described proactive checks of

group dynamics and clear avenues for prisoners to raise issues confidentially. Prisoners reported feeling able to approach staff and raise concerns through confidential discussions with staff.

Health and safety arrangements were well embedded. Monitoring recorded regular safety checks and ongoing maintenance processes. Fire safety equipment, alarm systems, and evacuation planning arrangements were in place and understood by staff and prisoners. Staff demonstrated good awareness of their responsibilities and accepted accountability for reporting issues identified.

Standard 4: Effective, Courtesy and Humane Use of Authority

Prisoners had not experienced use of force or physical restraint and reported positive interactions with staff. Staff demonstrated awareness of proportionality, procedural requirements, and recording requirements should restraint be required, though no incidents were reported during the year. Staff also engaged in reflective practice to identify learning and improve responses which demonstrated a continuous learning approach.

Property processes operated consistently, including arrangements for property transfers when prisoners moved to Lilias and procedures for incoming items. IPMs felt that both staff and prisoners understood these arrangements well.

IPMs observed routine random room searches, with resident's consent, which were conducted respectfully and thoroughly. Strip-searching was described by prisoners as distressing and unnecessary. The use of strip searching is entirely counter to the stated aims of the trauma informed approach at the establishment and is both retraumatising and degrading.

Standard 5: Respect, Autonomy and Protection Against Mistreatment

Relationships were a key strength. Interactions were calm, person-centred, and trauma-informed, with staff responding sensitively to individual needs and knowing their population well enough to recognise when the balance was disturbed for some reason. Prisoners reported feeling comfortable speaking with staff, expressed trust in their Personal Officers, and described staff as approachable, supportive, and responsive.

The regime supported autonomy through open living arrangements, flexible daily routines, access to communal spaces and choice of activities. While some prisoners initially found the level of personal responsibility challenging, most reported settling in well and valued the independence offered.

Morning meetings were used to share information and to plan the day. Opportunities for prisoner voice were evident and strengthened during the year. At the start of the year prisoners continued to raise the frequency of meetings and follow-up actions but this improved as the year progressed. Meeting minutes were accessible, though some prisoners sought clearer follow-up and more timely communication on points raised. Changes occasionally resulted in uncertainty, particularly where something was changed while prisoners were on home leave and communications around this could be improved.

A revised staff roster was implemented in February 2026. While in its infancy, early feedback from prisoners and staff was largely positive, citing improved continuity and visibility. Some staff had slight concerns relating to staffing availability and communication, however their concerns had not materialised by the end of the reporting year.

Overall, Lilias fostered a respectful environment and empowered personal autonomy within a flexible routine. There was scope to strengthen communication to enhance clarity.

Standard 6: Purposeful Activity

Prisoners had access to education, creative programmes, physical activity, and therapeutic support, all contributing positively to good health and personal development. Engagement levels were good, and partnerships with third sector organisations enhanced the range and quality of activities.

Education provision developed during the year, including the transition to People Plus in August 2025. Access to IT for learning, delayed since Lilias opened, was resolved in late September 2026. The availability of digital access was welcomed by prisoners who had an enthusiasm for digital learning opportunities. Prisoners spoke positively about the learning environment which included one-to-one support, mental-health-focused courses, creative writing, and book clubs. Creative and cultural activities were provided by third-sector partners such as Citizens Theatre and Print Clan. Wellbeing-focused activity included art therapy and ADHD-focused group sessions delivered by healthcare staff.

There was regular access to physical activity through gym sessions, outdoor activities, and e-bike initiatives. Prisoners valued the unrestricted access to fresh air and garden spaces during unlock. Faith-based and reflective programmes, including the Sycamore Tree programme delivered by Prison Fellowship Scotland, were also available. These activities provided structure to the day and supported personal development.

Family contact was well supported through flexible visit arrangements. Prisoners welcome the flexibility of visits and events which their family and friends could attend, such as the family day and an International Women's Day event.

Standard 7: Transition from Custody into the Community

Transitions from custody into the community were planned and supported. Prisoners nearing their release consistently reported feeling well prepared, with planning covering accommodation, benefits, employability, and access to relevant community services.

Progression was a priority and staff had worked to streamline the processes. Progression records viewed by IPMs demonstrated variation in levels of community access, reflecting sentence stage and decisions made through Risk Management Team processes. Community access decisions were taken on a case-by-case basis in line with SPS procedures, with access levels subject to regular review by personal officers and management. Prisoners who accessed the community described receiving both practical and emotional support from their personal officers and a range of external partners, including employability services, rehabilitation providers, and third sector organisations.

Despite this, IPMs reported a recurring concern of prisoners' perceptions of the pace and transparency of progression. This had been a recurring theme since Lilias opened. Some prisoners experienced delays and limited clarity around criteria and timescales and these could be more clearly laid out for individual prisoners to assist their understanding. There was also a perception of delays to new community access initiatives, specifically weekly food shopping in the community. Prisoners were aware this had been trialled and rolled out at Bella but had not commenced at Lilias by the end of the reporting year. It was reported towards the end of the reporting year that a standard operating procedure had been agreed by the end of March and phased implementation of weekly food shopping in the community would commence in April 2026.

Standard 8: Organisational Effectiveness

Staff described regular opportunities to reflect, share learning, and identify improvements. Staff learning resources had been developed including materials intended to strengthen shared understanding of community access processes. IPMs felt that the absence of fully embedded staff

learning resources was a potential factor which may have contributed to varied understanding amongst prisoners, as reported under Standard 7.

Staff engagement was high, and partnership working with external organisations supported effective service delivery. There was strong collaboration with healthcare, education providers, and third-sector organisations who supported the delivery of services and opportunities provided.

Action was taken in response to recommendations of oversight and scrutiny authorities and evidence was used to inform decision-making. This included actions directly linked to the HMIPS 2024 inspection recommendations and a member of staff undertaking a piece of work to consider the findings reported in the SPAROW evaluation which was published in December 2025.

Overall, the staff group was resilient with a positive culture of reflection and partnership working.

Standard 9: Health and Wellbeing

Health and wellbeing provision and services were accessible, responsive, and well-integrated into daily life. Prisoners reported positive experiences of healthcare and wellbeing support and partnership working with NHS and third sector providers enhanced delivery.

Services included primary care, mental health nursing, psychology, occupational therapy, and therapeutic activities. Prisoners reported that access to healthcare worked well and that they were able to submit written healthcare requests and speak directly with nursing staff when required. Where community or hospital-based care was necessary, processes for triage and liaison with external services were clear and effectively managed. All prisoners were offered the seasonal winter flu vaccination.

Targeted initiatives were delivered in response to identified need, with examples including ADHD-focused group sessions, facilitated by occupational therapy and healthcare staff. Such sessions aimed to support the development of practical strategies linked to daily living, learning, and employability. Therapeutic and wellbeing activity formed a strong component of provision. Creative, social, and movement-based initiatives were delivered in partnership with NHS staff and third-sector organisations, supporting emotional regulation, confidence, and social connection. These activities were well attended and positively received.

Healthcare staff described ongoing collaboration with SPS management and other professionals to anticipate and plan for resident care needs. Healthcare provision at Lilias received external recognition through shortlisting for a national nursing award, Mental Health Nursing Award - Nurse of the Year Awards 2026 reflecting the strengths in multidisciplinary working.

Health and wellbeing services were well integrated into the daily life and provided a holistic, person-centred approach which made a positive contribution for prisoners.