



Independent Prison Monitoring (IPM) Findings Annual Report

Prison:

HMP Greenock

Year (1 April – 31 March):

2023 – 2024

By Chris Collins



Annual Monitoring Figures



Total number of visits: 55



Total number of missed weeks: 5



Total number of prisoner requests received: 22



Total number of IPM hours: 190

Executive Summary

General Observations

Standard 1: Lawful and Transparent Custody

● Overall RAG rating: Green

IPMs have consistently reported positively on reception, admissions and liberations processes at HMP Greenock. Staff have been observed to work flexibly and in a friendly manner, while applying robust standards of practice. Monitors noted the introduction of a new body scanner which staff were being trained to use. IPMs have also observed the admissions process which was thorough, well organised and respectful and carried out in a decent and clean environment. IPMs have been advised that external appointments have been extremely problematic this year but that the picture is improving slightly.

The process of sentence progression continues to be a challenge for both staff and prisoners at HMP Greenock, however the IPM Team are pleased to report a slowly improving picture. While some prisoners in the National Top End in Chriswell, particularly those deemed to be complex cases, have reported a lack of clarity over their sentence planning and progression, IPMs have heard clear reports of better communication, improved timescales for FGTR and quicker turnaround of RMTs. This is very welcome progress from one year ago where there was widespread pessimism and frustration about the processes, and HMP Greenock staff should be commended for improving these processes. There are still some concerns about progression pathways for National Top End prisoners, however IPMs noted that potential solutions may be within the gift SPS HQ and external agencies

Monitors also reported that prisoners were appropriately managed and cared for in line with good standards of equality, with all prisoners afforded the same basic entitlements.

Standard 2: Decency

● Overall RAG rating: Amber

As noted above, HMP Greenock was reported to be a decent and humane environment for prisoners to serve their sentence. The establishment was in general, very clean with all basic essentials available to prisoners to live in a tidy and hygienic manner. While IPMs would echo the recent HMIPS recommendations about the deteriorating fabric of an ageing building, they noted that efforts were made on a daily basis by prisoners and staff to ensure general maintenance and

painting was carried out. Monitors noted that cells in all areas of the prison have been operational for almost all of the year. Due to the age of the building, leaks and water ingress were frequent during wet weather, primarily in the health centre and main corridor. This had presented significant challenges in maintaining standards of care for the Healthcare Team. IPMs reported these had been managed admirably by NHS staff and prison management. Conversely, improving weather during summer highlighted the bareness of outside space in HMP Greenock. Again this was a limitation without an immediate fix, but in comparison to other establishments, prisoners at HMP Greenock have little green or open space to look at during exercise, far less spend time in.

Fabric of the building notwithstanding, IPMs concluded that HMP Greenock was an establishment where every effort was made to ensure prisoners could serve their sentence with dignity and in a respectful and humane manner. Despite some challenges around timings of the regime, all basic entitlements of time in the fresh air and an offer of daily shower appear to be upheld for all categories of prisoner.

IPMs have observed prisoners on Talk to Me processes and noted a humane response to observations, with all appropriate entitlements in place and facilitated. Monitors have observed visits sessions at various times of the day and week for all categories of prisoners and noted the professional and decent way that families, children and friends were welcomed into the establishment.

Standard 3: Personal Safety

● Overall RAG rating: Green

IPMs have at all times reported on a well-run and orderly prison with good systems and practices in place to address challenges as they arise. Monitors were pleased to see the pilot of a 24/7 helpline for body fluid exposure and/or sharps injuries, and also welcomed the appointment of a harm reduction officer. On some visits this year, reference was made by staff or prisoners to problematic use of illicit substances in various parts of the establishment, resulting in orderly room processes and MORS for a number of prisoners.

IPMs report that the Intelligence Management Unit functions effectively and proactively and is supported by targeted searches from SPS HQ where necessary. IPMs comment 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. On the occasions where they checked, IPMs reported that prisoners held on Rule 95 were offered all their basic entitlements. Where IPMs have raised concerns over suggestions of bullying or intimidation, generally between prisoners, management have explained their decision making and response with openness and candour.

As alluded to above, emergency and / or contingency plans for serious incidents were in place, however the unsuitable nature of the building makes planning for all eventualities difficult.

Standard 4: Effective, Courteous and Humane Use of Authority

● Overall RAG rating: Green

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environment in all areas of the prison where friendly authority was maintained by staff. Where instances of misconduct, substance misuse, violence or intimidation do occur, appropriate processes were in place, in line with prison rules, to manage these in an effective manner. On the occasions where they have checked, IPMs reported that prisoners held on Rule 95 were offered all of their basic entitlements.

IPMs reported that the route was managed effectively and different population groups kept apart where deemed necessary.

Standard 5: Respect, Autonomy and Protection

● Overall RAG rating: Green

In general, relationships across the prison were good and staff were observed to treat prisoners with decency and dignity. PIACs were held in the halls and prisoners were offered the opportunity to express their views. As noted above, communication with LTPs and those in the National Top End had been improved throughout the year. Inductions were held in the Links Centre with appropriate literature and information for those beginning their sentence. At various points in the year, prisoners have spoken with IPMs about discrepancy in wages across the prison. Management advised that they were in line with SPS Wages Policy but there remains concern about the cost of living and rising canteen prices for prisoners.

Standard 6: Purposeful Activity

● Overall RAG rating: Amber

Monitors have been given detailed plans for the creation of a Wellbeing Hub in HMP Greenock and have visited the area and been advised of opportunities for prisoners. IPMs look forward to seeing this development progress and will monitor equitable access for all prisoners, which is a key aim. IPMs welcome the proactive approach, enthusiasm and evidence based knowledge that has delivered this initiative.

On all visits the gymnasium appeared to be functioning well, with good feedback from prisoners and PTs. Education classes were ongoing with a good atmosphere in the Centre. IPMs noted some staff changes during this year though this had little impact on classes. The hairdressers and the bike sheds have been visited weekly or bi weekly, although it was noted that 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. Monitors have observed all essential work parties in operation, with good allocation of tasks and received good feedback from prisoners in other activities, including the Links Centre and arts classes. Monitors noted the work taking place in the Links Centre including prevention of self-harm work. Some female prisoners highlighted the lack of time in the daily regime for completing their work, showering, taking exercise and eating their evening meal. Management have assured the IPM Team that the regime is reviewed regularly to ensure all groups of prisoners have opportunities to receive all entitlements.

Standard 7: Transitions from Custody into the Community

● Overall RAG rating: Green

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 greater presence from external agencies if at all possible. Monitors observed

prisoner liberations and noted good feedback about prisoner's time spent in HMP Greenock, which was generally viewed as a decent and humane place to serve a custodial sentence. It was noticeable that several 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 continued to speak with staff, prisoners and management about issues of progression and were pleased to note that First Grant Temporary Release cases demonstrated a slowly improving picture as noted above. Some cases remained problematic to move forward and management were open and transparent about the reasons for this, some of which was outwith their control.

IPMs were sharply aware of the impact on prisoners of the escort contract with GeoAmey which had not functioned adequately throughout the year. This had impacted on Special Escorted Leave and prisoner progression. While IPMs welcome the mitigations that HMP Greenock have attempted to put in place, these do not offset the problems associated with so many missed external appointments. Monitors have been advised of a slowly improving picture in the second half of this year.

Standard 8: Organisational Effectiveness

● Overall RAG rating: Amber

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

The application process for progression in non-complex cases appeared to be improving. From senior management down, IPMs reported a clear focus on improving timescales and communication and timeous engagement with SPS HQ. IPMs welcomed the ambition to make similar improvements with complex cases, albeit that may be within the parameters of external organisations responsibilities to an extent.

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

As in Standard 7, IPMs have heard from a number of prisoners about the impact of cancelled GeoAmey facilitated external appointments. This has caused frustration and distress as court, health and special leave appointments have been missed or postponed, often with little notice.

Standard 9: Health and Wellbeing

● Overall RAG rating: Green

Monitors visited the Health Centre throughout this year period and observed that there was 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 to be of a very good standard. Rarely do IPMs take requests from prisoners relating to healthcare. It is noteworthy that there were very good relationships between SPS and NHS staff at HMP Greenock, and that issues and challenges were resolved on a day to day basis.

RAG (Red, Amber, Green) status key:

- (Red) Some serious concerns
- (Amber) Some slight concerns
- (Green) No concerns / good practice

RAG rating: where IPMs felt each standard would be rated given their experience - not a complete analysis but based on the judgement of the IPM team.



Key Issues

1. GeoAmey provision and access to external appointments
2. Progression
3. Purposeful Activity



Encouraging Observations

Relationship between staff and prisoners were generally very healthy. There was an improving picture on progression pathways and timelines for sentence progression. There was a sense of shared, collective purpose from staff, and potential for small scale innovative rehabilitative work. Healthcare was of a very good standard.



Conclusion

Overall IPMs impression remained of a safe, orderly and well run prison at HMP Greenock. There were many individual examples of good practice highlighted by the monitoring team, and the relationships between staff and prisoners were clearly very good, judging by the interactions observed by IPMs on a weekly basis. IPMs were made to feel welcome and assisted by staff in dealing with prisoner requests and in making observations IPMs will continue to monitor against the key issues highlighted in the section above in the coming year.