



# Independent Prison Monitoring (IPM) Findings Annual Report

**Prison:**

**HMP GLENOCHIL**

**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	51
	Total number of missed weeks	1	3
	Total number of prisoner requests received	69	143
	Total number of IPM hours	193	149

## Executive Summary

This annual report summarises the observations made and engagement with prisoners, staff, and management throughout the year, by Independent Prison Monitors (IPMs) against the nine HMIPS inspection and monitoring standards.

Over the course of the reporting period the IPM team functioned struggled with low membership. This relative lack of capacity resulted in three missed visits over the year. While this is of concern, IPMs did conduct extra visits over the year to bring the total number of IPM visits up to 51 visits in 52 weeks. Moreover, during some of the weeks where an IPM was unable to visit, the Prison Monitoring Coordinator conducted a visit to maintain a monitoring presence in the prison.

Alongside the IPM team being relatively low in numbers there was a significantly high number of prisoner requests received (by comparison with some other prisons and last year) and the team dealt with all of these successfully.

The prison and its staff worked hard to overcome challenges, in the face of some issues that were beyond the control of the Prison Management Team – for example overcrowding, low staff numbers (including high sickness absence), and national difficulties relating to programmes/progression. IPMs found many examples of where staff went the extra mile to ensure that prisoners were well looked after, and that safety and order was retained. Generally, prison processes were found to work well. The following sections provide more detail on IPMs' general observations over the reporting period.

## General Observations

### Standard 1: Lawful and Transparent Custody

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IPMs visited the Separation and Reintegration Unit (SRU) several times during the reporting period. IPMs noted that at times all cells were full (as well as there being several prisoners on Rule 95 being held on the halls). IPMs expressed concern about so many long term Rule 95 prisoners.

IPMs were assured that copies of the Prison Rules were available to Prisoners, with copies on each flat in each hall.

## Standard 2: Decency

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Early in the reporting period prisoners raised concerns with IPMs about the increasing practice of doubling up cells. IPMs discussed this with the management team, who confirmed that, while doubling up of some cells was happening, this was mainly in what they referred to as 'small double' cells and was in response to the need to close some cells while repairs were taking place to the roof of one of the halls. This was reasonable as a short-term temporary measure, although it was noted that the 'small doubles' did not meet the minimum cell dimensions of 4m<sup>2</sup> of living space per prisoner. IPMs acknowledged the difficulties facing prison management given the overcrowding situation happening across the prison estate.

There were occasions where rubbish was outside both Harvieston and Abercromie halls, thrown out of prisoners' cell windows. IPMs were concerned about the possibility of this attracting vermin. Management responded well later in the year with work parties out in the grounds addressing this issue.

IPMs observed the searching of prisoners coming back to the halls from workshops, being conducted sensitively with appropriate use of electronic equipment. Nothing observed suggested that prisoners were uncomfortable with the process.

IPMs could not find evidence of a formal policy in place to manage neurodiverse prisoners. One prisoner with autism, for example, said they sometimes felt disadvantaged. IPMs thought there was a potential Equality Act issue here. Front line staff said there was little guidance available specific to the management of neurodiverse prisoners, so used common sense and experience.

IPMs spoke with staff regarding prisoner reports that there was a problem with towels being laundered. Staff informed IPMs that there had been a difficulty with the laundry at one point, but that overall, there had been an improvement. There seemed to be an inconsistency between flats and halls with how prisoners accessed clean towels, however latterly IPMs learned that a more consistent approach was being implemented.

## Standard 3: Personal Safety

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IPMs discussed with staff the importance of completing the forms for prisoners managed under the SPS Talk to Me strategy. Some staff felt that these documents could be completed more fully. The Line Manager was aware, and individual staff were to be informed how to improve these, which IPMs welcomed.

There was a robust process for admitting visitors and staff members into the prison, including the use of scanners, and the use of a private room to conduct searches when necessary.

Staff handled prisoner on prisoner assaults and blue light incidents in a calm, well-rehearsed and competent manner.

IPMs discussed with staff the ongoing issue of drugs getting into the prison. Prison management were very much aware of the issues and taking all reasonable actions to address them. NHS Fife and Forth Valley issued warning notices to all prisoners about the risks relating to drugs that were known to be in circulation.

## Standard 4: Effective, Courteous and Humane Use of Authority

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IPMs sat in on several Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) hearings and found them to be run well, meeting all the standard requirements. A panel of three were at the hearings. Prisoners were given ample time and encouragement to make their respective cases; questions asked by panel members were made in an open and supportive manner. IPMs did however suggest that staff involved in the ICC hearing process should ensure that prisoners were more aware of their rights.

IPMs were impressed with the knowledge staff had of each prisoner in the SRU as well as their sense of responsibility for prisoners' care. IPMs checked records for all prisoners held there and confirmed that they all had reintegration plans in place, including for prisoners who had been there for extended periods (one over 2.5 years). While the care of prisoners in the SRU was very good, it remained a concern that there were prisoners held in the SRU for such long periods.

IPMs observed many good examples of engaging effectively with prisoners and building constructive and empathetic relationships, with a high level of skill. Staff also worked well under pressure when dealing with aggressive prisoners, and there were also other good examples of staff de-escalating potentially volatile situations.

## **Standard 5: Respect, Autonomy and Protection**

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IPMs monitored the prison complaints system. Two key points were made to IPMs by prisoners: (1) Time limits specified in the Prison Rules had not always been met; (2) PCF1 forms had allegedly been 'lost'. This was discussed with the management team who responded to say that at times the complaints process had been inundated, for example with vexatious complaints. There were also examples where prisoners submitted PCF2 (confidential) complaints when a PCF1 would have been more appropriate. This influenced the ability to meet timescales. It was recognised that staff sought to deal with complaints verbally, which was appropriate but prisoners still expected a written response when they had written for help. Senior management assured IPMs that they had reiterated to First Line Managers the importance of following the process fully, including with regard to timeliness.

IPMs noted that when prisoners were being called for various reasons, only their names were used, and no further information was overheard by others in the vicinity. When they approached the gate, a prison officer spoke with them directly. IPMs welcomed this in protecting prisoners' personal information and dignity.

IPMs conducted some focused monitoring work on the management of Trans prisoners, including looking at relevant legislation and SPS Policy and how it is applied by staff. Staff were found to address Trans prisoners sensitively, using the correct pronouns, and showing understanding of their circumstances. IPMs found no mistreatment. IPMs also looked at the availability of products on the canteen list, arrangements for clothing and makeup, and attitudes of front-line staff. The general standard of care seemed adequate, but there was some sense of a prison still adapting to the needs of Trans prisoners. IPMs noted, for example, that there was not a supplementary canteen list as at HMP Stirling providing access for female accessories such as makeup, and hair products. The prison's LGBTQ+ group provided a forum for discussion of relevant issues.

## **Standard 6: Purposeful Activity**

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IPMs observed family visits and noted that the officers were very friendly and welcoming to all visitors, gentle with the children, and helped to make everyone feel at ease. The children were kept entertained while they waited as there were numerous toys available for them to play with. On one occasion a family whose child was visibly upset were given privacy in a separate room and were treated with sensitivity when being escorted. IPMs considered the Family Room to be of great benefit, particularly for those families with young children.

Availability of purposeful activity was good, and facilities were well used. A wide range of purposeful activity was taking place throughout the prison including education, gym and recycling work, as well as a 10km run taking place within the prison establishment, Highland Games, Recovery Walks and access to Therapy Dogs. Prisoners said that the music facility was good and noted the positive impact on mental health of being able to undertake recreational and exercise activities within the residential landing.

At times there were significant staff shortages, including a lot of staff on long-term sickness absence, and staff numbers at weekends presented an issue. This resulted in prisoners spending more time in cell at weekends. Prison officers from the workshops were sometimes drafted in to cover the residential areas during the week, resulting in some workshops having to close. There was also an impact on time out of cell in the evenings sometimes. Prison management demonstrated a clear willingness to resolve these issues, and staff demonstrated flexibility. Prison officers from other prisons came to pick up extra shifts while the staffing problem was resolved.

In recognition of the early weekend lock up, and thus an early evening mealtime, a food pack was issued at weekends for prisoners to consume in their cells.

## **Standard 7: Transitions from Custody into the Community**

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IPMs picked up on what felt like a growing level of frustration among prisoners and staff about inadequate resources to support progression. Significantly, several front-line SPS staff raised concerns about it with IPMs. Management reported that an increase in prisoners on an Order for Lifelong Restriction (OLR) which had added to the issues of freeing up staff to do progression work. There were problems in recruiting psychologists which also affected progression. IPMs recognised this was a national issue rather than a prison-specific issue.

IPMs discussed the early release scheme with Management with a particular interest in the risk of releasing prisoners into homelessness. IPMs were satisfied that there was a process in place for SPS to join up with the local authority to discuss housing arrangements. IPMs had concerns that there was the potential for prisoners to be released homeless but in fact there were no instances where HMP Glenochil released prisoners under the scheme without somewhere to live. IPMs were assured that the process itself was constantly considered for potential improvements.

## **Standard 8: Organisational Effectiveness**

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IPMs reported good evidence of strong strategic leadership. Strategic aims and priorities for 2023-28 were set out clearly via posters on highly visible staff noticeboards. This was also true of the 2024/25 priority objectives. IPMs spoke with staff at random and all were aware of the strategy and objectives.

IPMs noted a strong sense of good high level strategic vision and a culture of continuous improvement. At the same time operational leadership appeared to cascade well through the prison with clarity about roles and responsibilities. IPMs reported "Not all front line SPS staff quite understand this split, sometimes seeing the 'strategic stuff' as disconnected from day-to-day operational management. But the overall impression is positive." IPMs noted a willingness by management and staff to innovate and test new ways of doing things in the face of extreme staffing pressures.

There was a significant amount of unrest and protests by prisoners in Harviestoun Hall following a management decision to ask Abercrombie prisoners to work in the kitchen. There had not been enough Harviestoun prisoners available to fill the work party. Staff managed the situation safely and management successfully negotiated a compromise whereby enough Harviestoun prisoners were identified to fill the work party, and Abercrombie prisoners were offered an additional work opportunity in cleaning the kitchen at the end of the day.

## **Standard 9: Health and Wellbeing**

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IPMs monitored the provision of healthcare and support for the growing population of elderly prisoners and those with additional care needs and thought that provision was appropriate for their

needs. This included contracted-in elderly care providers who were visible and provided a much-needed service.

IPMs spoke with prisoners and staff about NHS healthcare provision and concluded that there was in general a reasonable service being provided. SPS staff noted the huge pressure on NHS resources at Glenochil and the low NHS staff to prisoner ratio compared with some other prisons.

Prisoners agreed that NHS staff worked hard in difficult circumstances. Prisoners also noted that the NHS complaints system was severely stretched leading to frustrations on all sides, and this was confirmed by staff.

It was felt that mental health services could be improved whilst generally the feeling from staff and prisoners that IPMs spoke to was that the NHS did a good job.



## Key Issues

1. Staffing pressures had an impact on prisoners' time out of cell particularly at weekends.
2. Overcrowding and use of 'small doubles' that do not meet international standards for cell living space.
3. Access to opportunities for progression.



## Encouraging Observations

Care and management of prisoners in the SRU was excellent.

Elderly care provision was also excellent.