



# Independent Prison Monitoring (IPM) Findings Annual Report

**Prison:**

**HMP INVERNESS**

**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	64	61
	Total number of missed weeks	0	1
	Total number of prisoner requests received	13	8
	Total number of IPM hours	199	157

## 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.

Despite being a relatively small team the IPMs delivered the statutory requirement of a minimum one visit to HMP Inverness per week. There was only one week where this was not achieved, however extra visits ensured that there were in excess of fifty-two visits conducted in 2024/25.

There were relatively few prisoner requests received in comparison with some closed conditions prisons, but IPMs ensured that they spoke to many prisoners throughout the reporting period in order to gather information from prisoners on their treatment by staff and the prison conditions. The information below shows that, based on IPM findings over the course of the reporting period, HMP Inverness did well against the nine HMIPS standards

IPMs at HMP Inverness have traditionally received very low numbers of prisoner requests in comparison with other prisons, and this was again the case in 2024/25. IPMs were clear that this was in no small part due to the commendable positive relationships between prisoners and staff that were observed throughout the reporting period. This once more was a clear indication that staff worked well with prisoners to resolve issues quickly together, rather than prisoners feeling the need to make requests for assistance to IPMs.

HMP Inverness appeared to IPMs to be a well-run prison, despite the complexities involved in having to run several different regimes for a very mixed prisoner population. It was also to the credit of the staff that this was achieved within what was clearly an ageing prison facility with more limited resources, in terms of facilities, purposeful activity, etc. than in larger more modern prisons.

## General Observations

### Standard 1: Lawful and Transparent Custody

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IPMs observed the induction process running smoothly, with prisoners treated well by staff. Prisoners were given a "Prisoner Information Guide" containing lots of information for prisoners to navigate their time in prison. IPMs were also assured that the process for calculating prisoners' release dates was robust, and that communication of release dates to the prisoner was

appropriate. Remand prisoners confirmed they were aware of their entitlements, the right to contact a solicitor, etc.

IPMs monitored arrangements for eligible prisoners to vote in the general election, including speaking to senior management, front-line management, front-line officers, and twelve remand prisoners. IPMs concluded that senior and front-line managers made clear efforts to ensure that those who wished to vote were made aware of their right to do so. There was evidence of an offer of help with registration forms etc which was important, as prisoners had no online access. However, the prisoners IPMs spoke with generally did not know much about how to vote and in one case a prisoner was unaware there was an election taking place.

IPMs expressed concern about a prisoner being held in isolation in the Separation and Reintegration Unit on a Rule 95(12). The prisoner appeared to IPMs to have severe psychiatric illness, and IPMs thought that being held on medical grounds (Rule 41) may have been more appropriate. IPMs did however recognise that staff were doing all they could within their power to ensure the prisoner was kept safe from harm, and the prisoner was the subject of consideration by a multidisciplinary team including healthcare provision. The prisoner was eventually transferred to secure psychiatric care.

IPMs observed prisoners about to be transferred to another prison. The searching and processing of prisoners was effective and followed protocols. It was clear that the staff were experienced, and it was managed well and professionally. IPMs did however feel that there was a lack of communication to prisoners as to when and why they were to be transferred, with little by way of consideration given to family visits and how this may affect transferred prisoners, particularly those in situations of vulnerability. Prison management explained that due to the complexities of the prison population groups, and overcrowding across the estate, it was necessary at times to transfer prisoners out. A process is in place to identify which prisoners are most appropriately transferred when it is required, and these prisoners are made aware of this, along with a full explanation, to manage their expectations. IPMs were satisfied with this response. IPMs also suggested to management that prisoners processed and awaiting transfer in what was a small room with little in it, could be provided with reading materials etc. to pass the time.

## **Standard 2: Decency**

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The prison was repeatedly observed to be clean and tidy throughout, and in good decorative order. IPMs also monitored shower areas in all wings and found them to be in a clean and tidy condition.

IPMs monitored the preparation and quality of food and discussed with prisoners. The kitchen area was kept clean. Options for different preferences/faiths (e.g. vegetarian/halal/etc.) were available. There were no complaints from prisoners, and there was a good range of food on offer including healthy options. Despite some budgetary pressures on the kitchen, food quality was found by IPMs to have been maintained.

IPMs did some monitoring in June 2024 in relation to overcrowding, which was proving problematic across the prison estate. Management informed staff that there were significant numbers of cells (greater than 50% at times) designed for single occupancy which were inhabited by two prisoners, which was a concern to IPMs. Management recognised this as a significant risk, and this was reviewed and reported to SPS HQ regularly. There was adequate clothing for all prisoners and the laundry was coping with the volume. Prison visits were continuing and were unaffected. All prisoners were getting access to fresh air and exercise time. Access to healthcare was unaffected. All of this was welcomed by the IPM service however some overpopulation was starting to be reported by staff as an issue around January 2025.

## **Standard 3: Personal Safety**

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IPMs saw lots of evidence of staff ensuring that different prisoner categories were kept separate during different elements of the regime. There were several regimes required due to the mix of prisoners at Inverness. IPMs were made aware that there were instances where untried and convicted prisoners were mixed, for example during outdoor recreation to maximise staff resources. Management explained that this was done to ensure the best use of available staff due to the complexity of the prisoner population, and assured IPMs that remands and convicted prisoners did not share cells. Management explained further that the initiative was managed according to risk and was proceeding well without any concerns.

IPMs spoke with some prisoners being managed under the SPS Talk to Me Policy. These prisoners reported being well looked after by staff with a good level of interaction and care provided.

IPMs ascertained that all cell doors, including safer cells and Separation and Reintegration Unit cells, had notices on the doors regarding evacuation procedures in the event of an emergency.

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

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IPMs saw good evidence of staff awareness of the need to minimise the use of segregation (for example Rule 95).

IPMs checked the records for prisoners being held in the Separation and Reintegration Unit and found that prisoners being held there all had reintegration plans in place as required. IPMs discussed the reintegration process with staff, who showed detailed knowledge of the prisoners in their care. IPMs noted good evidence of empathy in a challenging situation.

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

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IPMs spoke to significant numbers of prisoners who said that relationships with staff were good, and any issues brought up tended to be resolved quickly. This had in the past been cited as one reason the Inverness IPM team received fewer prisoner requests in comparison with other prisons' teams.

IPMs spent an hour with prisoners at recreation and spoke in depth with five of them about their experiences at Inverness. Feedback was unusually positive. Overall, there was a sense of a calm and well managed prison where staff and prisoners interact well.

IPMs reviewed provision of information to prisoners on notice boards and reported that there was good, clear and up to date information displayed. Notable features were Prisoner Information Action Committee (PIAC) minutes, guidance on using the SPS complaints process, and visits arrangements. Information about The Samaritans was also prominently displayed, providing clear instructions should individuals wish to talk with a Samaritan volunteer, who can visit the prison.

## **Standard 6: Purposeful Activity**

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IPMs observed a wide range of purposeful activity taking place, including painting and decorating the prison, gardening, time out in the fresh air, gym and library. IPMs were pleased to hear that some of the work activity provided at the prison had resulted in some prisoners getting jobs upon release. Training and certification in industrial cleaning was one such example.

IPMs were pleased to hear about the job fair that was put on with engineering and construction companies. The organiser of the event said that there were staff shortages in these industries in the community and it was hoped the event may result in prisoners eventually acquiring work on release.

Education opportunities at the prison were not 'long term study', as the majority of prisoners were on shorter term sentences. IPMs felt that the relatively short education courses run at the prison were appropriate for the population/sentence lengths and ensured that prisoners could complete courses.

There was a range of courses available at the Education Centre, and prisoners were reportedly happy with the courses they signed up to, which included SQA qualifications. The most popular activity at the Education Centre was art in its various forms. IPMs reported that it was good to see some prisoners being able to enter their work in the national Koestler Awards.

IPMs talked with the two Family Liaison Officers and were struck by their dedication and passion to make visits positive for both prisoners and families. A recent innovation that impressed IPMs was a 'clothes bank', set up by staff who donated unwanted clothes. Care was taken to make the visiting room as pleasant as possible, with lots of prisoner art on the walls. There was a very small toy area in the corner which staff said they would love to improve, but IPMs understood there were no resources available at that time. IPMs spoke with a number of visitors, who were more than satisfied with visiting arrangements and the care and support they received from staff.

IPMs spoke with the prison chaplain and some staff about prisoners being made aware of religious services. There was information up on the walls about these, though the Chaplain felt that more could be done to better advertise their services.

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

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IPMs focused some of their monitoring activity on the prison's planning and implementation of the Early Release Programme. They spoke with the Governor, front line officers and prisoners, and the general impression was of a well-planned and implemented programme. IPMs welcomed the fact that the Governor had an effective veto, giving them responsibility for ensuring that all those released early were adequately prepared. IPMs heard some feedback from front line staff and prisoners to the effect that the programme had been 'shrouded in a degree of secrecy' leading to rumour and uncertainty, but this may have been unavoidable. There was also important feedback from reception staff to the effect that Highland Council and NHS Highland both played an important role.

IPMs learned about the "My Recovery" and "My Relationships" programmes and were informed that these are popular among prisoners to the extent that there was a waiting list. The popularity of the programmes was taken to indicate that they are well-run and beneficial to prisoners.

IPMs reported a concern about a general lack of support for prisoners around internet access, which can cause problems particularly for longer term prisoners who are unable to apply for jobs online, use online banking, learn about the modern world including buying groceries online or using Google/Apple Pay etc.

IPMs spoke with Criminal Justice Social Work staff regarding an apparent lack of good affordable housing options on release, and any support available to access these. This occurred more in some local authority areas than others. IPMs felt that there was insufficient provision/support which appeared to cause anxiety for prisoners. IPMs were therefore pleased to hear, towards the end of the reporting period, of management meetings taking place with other organisations prior to the release of prisoners to ensure as smooth a transition as possible to ensure housing etc was available and minimising the chance of "failure" and return to prison.

IPMs welcomed improvements to available 'time out of cell' with improved recreational activities including games and group activities.

## Standard 8: Organisational Effectiveness

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IPMs concluded that there appeared to be sufficient support available for staff following traumatic events such as the suicide of a prisoner.

IPMs heard that there were more examples of GEOAmey failing to provide scheduled transport to prisoners e.g. prisoner transfers to other prisons.

IPMs spoke with some officers, both experienced as well as new to the job. Officers spoken to knew the purposes of their job and indicated that there was regular weekly training which was recorded on their files and if missed had to be attended on another date. They received an annual appraisal from their First Line Manager.

Prisoners raised with IPMs the issue of the cost of canteen items having increased, in line with inflation, but that prisoner wages had not.

The logistics of managing multiple regimes within the prison, and its impact on prisoner access to elements of the regime, specifically the time enabled for various activities, was raised as a concern by IPMs. However, IPMs were keen to report they thought that staff did well under the circumstances, and this was confirmed by management.

## Standard 9: Health and Wellbeing

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IPMs heard that there were continuing problems with GeoAmey non-attendance for hospital appointments. For example, one prisoner had not been picked up to attend a chemotherapy appointment. SPS staff took him by car, thus diverting staff from normal duties.

IPMs were concerned to hear about a prisoner who had been held in the Separation and Reintegration Unit under Prison Rule 41, segregation on medical grounds, for several weeks, and felt that he should have been managed in a secure psychiatric facility. IPMs noted that the care shown by SPS and NHS staff to this prisoner was above and beyond what they were normally asked to provide and that the care and responsibility they showed towards this prisoner was praiseworthy.

IPMs were impressed with the work of the Recovery Wing, including the stipulation that only prisoners who demonstrated a desire to recover are housed there, for a better chance of success.

IPMs were pleased to hear that a doctor was present at the Health Centre Monday to Friday and Saturday mornings. A dentist came twice each week and chiropodists and opticians came on an occasional basis as required. Nurses were present every day. IPMs reported that, overall, there was a positive picture of prisoners being well-cared for. There was also good feedback from prisoners.

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## Key Issues

1. Age and limitations of the prison facilities.
2. Complexity of having a very mixed prisoner population in a small prison.



## Encouraging Observations

Prisoner/staff relationships were consistently observed to be excellent.

The Recovery Wing was deemed to be an excellent facility.