



# Independent Prison Monitoring (IPM) Findings Annual Report

**Prison:**

**HMP PERTH**

**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                     | 55      | 54      |
|  | Total number of missed weeks               | 0       | 1       |
|  | Total number of prisoner requests received | 75      | 75      |
|  | Total number of IPM hours                  | 275     | 270     |

## 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.

The IPM Team worked hard over the course of the year, ensuring that a statutory monitoring visit was conducted at HMP Perth in all but one week of the year. Additional visits were conducted to make up for the missed visit.

As the observations below indicate, IPMs generally found the prison worked well. This was despite significant overcrowding. There were instances where prisoners were required to share a cell designed for single occupancy which is not acceptable. Several of the cells used as doubles were well below the internationally recognised minimum space standards for people sharing. IPMs nonetheless reported that staff did as well as they could under the circumstances to manage the situation. There was little by way of complaints from prisoners about having to share single cells.

The other significant issue that came up frequently was a lack of opportunity for progression. IPMs fully recognised that this was a national issue rather than being specific to HMP Perth, but the situation is significant and affecting prisoners' ability to move to the open estate and gain parole.

## General Observations

### Standard 1: Lawful and Transparent Custody

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IPMs monitored the arrangements and information available to staff and prisoners for the General Election on 4 July 2024, as set out in SPS prison instruction GMA 011A/24. IPMs felt that there was a general lack of knowledge of arrangements and information among hall staff. One staff member said that eligible prisoners 'will have been given information' - but they were unable to provide specifics - and similarly so with some more senior staff. A remand prisoner who IPMs spoke with said that they were unaware of their right to vote, and did not recall receiving any information. On 24th June IPMs observed election information posters being put up in A Hall, however this was too late given that people wishing to register for a postal vote were required to register online by 19th June. IPMs were therefore concerned that remand prisoners were not sufficiently facilitated to exercise their democratic right to vote.

IPMs checked with several prisoners to ask if they all knew their liberation dates and they all confirmed that they did.

IPMs discussed the arrangements for managing a transgender admission who had incorrectly been sent to a prison in the male estate. The courts, police and GEOAmey had seemingly not communicated well around the prisoner's gender, and HMP Perth was unaware of the prisoner's correct gender status as a Trans person when they arrived. Fortunately, this was identified by HMP Perth's admissions process, and there had been a free cell available in the SRU. IPMs reported that the prisoner seemed to have been well looked after overnight before going to HMP Stirling.

## **Standard 2: Decency**

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IPMs discussed the effects of overcrowding at the prison and heard that more prisoners were now having to double up in cells designed for one person, which is not acceptable. Several prisoners contacted the IPM service unhappy that their single cell markers had been reviewed and removed by the NHS to identify potential prisoners for sharing cells. IPMs recognised the need for this approach, but were concerned that some markers were being removed that would have otherwise benefitted the prisoners in question were it not for overcrowding. Some issues relating to overcrowding that prisoners complained about were: a shortage of electricity sockets due to doubling up, and extension leads were not allowed for safety reasons; the hall being too hot due to lack of air circulating, as windows only had limited opening; cell repairs taking a long time to be undertaken.

However, IPMs did note that they had expected to see less order in the residential areas because of the increased population, but in fact everything seemed orderly and under control. The interaction between prisoners and officers seemed cordial. Generally, while overcrowding is becoming an increasing issue IPMs found that staff were doing the best they could under the circumstances.

On a few occasions IPMs picked up on the issue of an insufficient supply of clothing, underwear etc. for example in A Hall and in the admissions wing in C Hall. IPMs raised this with staff a few times and were pleased to note that the situation later improved.

There was lots of cleaning in progress during IPM visits. All flats were observed to be clean and tidy. IPMs did note a few instances where there was litter in the grounds, but were pleased to see the grounds work party clearing this on each occasion.

IPMs monitored the preparation and serving of food and reported that it looked like good quality and good sized portions. Some prisoners that IPMs spoke to were complimentary of the food. IPMs were satisfied that food preparation for Muslim prisoners during Ramadan was done appropriately. Most food made at the prison was prepared from scratch.

## **Standard 3: Personal Safety**

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IPMs were pleased to note posters advertising Alcohol Anonymous and Cocaine Anonymous on display.

IPMs noted there had been a health and safety inspection taking place. They also observed searches being carried out on prisoners before moving them to healthcare, and checks being made that the route was clear before doing so. This supported prisoners' personal safety.

During one visit, IPMs were aware of a prisoner who was in a safer cell and seemed to be in distress and was shouting behind the door. Staff were immediately attentive and showed care and

compassion, checking on two separate occasions that the prisoner was safe. IPMs viewed this as positive.

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

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IPMs visited the SRU on several occasions and were satisfied with what they observed, including the knowledge and dedication of the staff. There was good interaction between prisoners and staff, including the Unit Manager. IPMs observed a prisoner being removed to the SRU, and noted that the removal was carried out in a competent and controlled manner.

IPMs reported on other instances where prisoners were correctly searched and treated appropriately and spoken to appropriately by both prison officers and GeoAmey staff and also reported examples of staff working positively with prisoners in difficult circumstances.

IPMs spoke to officers in the Electronic Control Room about how long CCTV recordings were kept and were told that it was a period of two weeks. IPMs had some concerns that this may be too short a period, given the length of time it can take for a prisoner to submit a complaint, potentially escalating to an ICC hearing, then onto the SPSO etc., should CCTV evidence be needed to support their complaint. However, prison management confirmed that any incidents that were filmed by CCTV were kept.

IPMs were made aware that there were significant waiting times for prisoners to be able to access property being held for them. Prison management clarified that prisoners did not need to attend the property area in order to access property that was held for them as they could request to check their property card and then request the property they wanted from the card.

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

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IPMs saw evidence of good relationships between prisoners and staff, showing respect and courtesy towards prisoner privacy.

Complaint forms, PCFs, were not available on all landings, although staff said they were available on request. IPMs were concerned that not all prisoners would feel comfortable asking staff for complaints forms. IPMs also felt that a more robust system could be implemented whereby prisoners received a receipt upon submission of a PCF form. There have been instances over time where prisoners felt that staff did not address their complaint or that the complaint had been lost.

## **Standard 6: Purposeful Activity**

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IPMs found purposeful activity at the prison was good, and diverse examples included the following:

The Lifeskills courses benefitted from a large uptake.

Guest speakers were arranged to visit the prison (e.g. footballers and a boxer).

A 'Healthy Dads' initiative to improve family relationships was provided. IPMs were also pleased to hear about some initiatives being run by the prison Chaplain, for example 'Men Behaving Dadly' parenting classes and a bereavement course.

IPMs were very complimentary of the Construction Academy and the potential that this had to secure employment for prisoners on release.

The gym was well used and IPMs also saw how there were activities being brought in to suit all men, younger and older, darts, pickleball, carpet bowling and circuit training.

'Blue Christmas services' were provided by the Chaplain for prisoners who felt that for whatever reason Christmas was not a happy time. The same was made available for staff.

IPMs were complimentary of the support put in place for veteran prisoners.

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

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IPMs reported that the Scottish Prison Service Early Release Programme was run well at the prison.

A significant number of prisoners that IPMs spoke with expressed concern about a lack of access to programmes. IPMs discussed this with staff, who acknowledged the issues. IPMs recognised that the waiting list for programmes is managed nationally rather than locally at the prison. Management confirmed that prisoner progression is considered at fortnightly Risk Management Team (RMT) meetings.

## **Standard 8: Organisational Effectiveness**

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IPMs reported that there were still some issues relating to GEOAmey's capacity to provide prisoner transport. On one occasion that IPMs heard about this it had resulted in a prisoner having his court hearing adjourned twice. HMP Perth staff had taken the prisoner to court, which IPMs welcomed, however they stated to IPMs that they felt the prisoner may have felt undue additional stress due to the adjournment. IPMs were clear that HMP Perth staff had done their best and the issue was due to GeoAmey.

IPMs monitored the roll out of the new 35-hour week shift patterns. Staff said that there had been some issues initially that needed to be sorted out, for example there being low staff numbers at certain times of the day due to staff finishing shifts, including in the evenings which was limiting recreational activities for prisoners. Management explained latterly that an issues log was created to capture anomalies or concerns during the early stages of the project, and this document was closed off in January in conjunction with the Prison Officers Association.

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

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IPMs were pleased to hear that a new Sanctuary Mental Health Course, that the prison Chaplain had run with an advanced nurse practitioner for prisoners with mental health issues, had been successful. There was 100% completion of the course by the prisoners, some of whom were Listeners who could then go on and signpost the course to others.

There were quite a few prisoner requests related to health and medication etc. The general consensus among prisoners was that the waiting times in the prison to see a GP, dentist, mental health nurse etc was too long and some of the prisoners told IPMs they had been waiting quite a while. Towards the end of the reporting period IPMs noted that the waiting list for GPs was down to around two to three weeks and the GP locum system was working well. Mental Health referral times were also down. IPMs welcomed this.

IPMs welcomed information about the Medicines Safety Team and how they made decisions on individual cases, such as medicines, treatment etc. This enabled prisoners to know that discussions had taken place with various personnel, so that informed decisions could be made. IPMs also noted that the Medical Markers Team' operated in a similar way.

IPMs were pleased to note a few instances of prisoners being out at hospital appointments including surgery. Previously there had been difficulties in GEOAmey facilitating these.

However, one prisoner had expressed to IPMs that they felt humiliated during a hospital appointment when asked to remove his clothes whilst handcuffed to a GEOAmey officer, who was 'inside the curtain' with the prisoner. IPMs felt that alternative arrangements could have been considered to afford the prisoner more privacy.

There were a number of prisoners who raised healthcare matters with IPMs, however IPMs noted that it was evident that each patient's complex issues were being addressed by NHS Tayside.



## Key Issues

1. Overcrowding
2. Lack of progression opportunities



## Encouraging Observations

IPMs reported positively about the attitude and approach of staff when interacting with prisoners. This included maintaining calm professionalism in the face of angry prisoners and staff going out of their way to help prisoners. For example taking them to external appointments where GEOAmey were unable to do so.