



**HMIPS**  
HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland  
INSPECTING AND MONITORING

**News Release**  
**A Thematic Review of Segregation in Scottish Prisons**

This review was instigated by Wendy Sinclair-Gieben, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland (HMIPS). It was conducted in partnership with Edinburgh University, by Dr Liz Ravalde (Senior Researcher, HMIPS) and Deborah Russo (PhD Candidate, University of Edinburgh).

On visits to Scotland in 2018 and 2019, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) raised significant concerns over the management of segregated prisoners.

In response, HMIPS launched a thematic review to provide a comprehensive insight into the treatment, conditions, and experiences of segregated prisoners across Scotland and to make recommendations for improvements.

The review identified five areas of key recommendations, along with a further five sets of recommendations, all of which can be found in the report.

While often viewed simply as dangerous, violent, or refractory, those held in segregation in Scotland's prison Separation and Reintegration Units (SRUs) are also often some of the most vulnerable prisoners, with complex psychological challenges and needs. It is therefore imperative that the State not only ensures that segregated prisoners' basic human rights are upheld, but also that they receive the support they need to move out of segregation, progress through their sentences, and return as responsible citizens living safely in the community when they leave prison.

This review makes clear that the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) and NHS staff do their best to meet segregated prisoners' complex needs and will often go above and beyond to provide support for them. But it is also clear that a significant shift in the approach to segregation is required.

We found that many of the concerns raised by the CPT remain. We found evidence of overuse and long detrimental segregation periods, and we found a lack of meaningful human contact, mental health support, meaningful activity, and reintegration planning for segregated prisoners.

It was also clear that SRUs are too often used inappropriately as a place of safety for those who are extremely mentally unwell, whether awaiting placement in the forensic secure estate or suffering from severe personality or behavioural disorders which do not meet the threshold for inpatient treatment.

There is therefore a pressing need to review current segregation systems and behaviour management strategies to address these concerns and find alternative options for managing the cohorts of prisoners who cannot function in mainstream accommodation. There is a particularly urgent need to address the issues

surrounding the segregation of those identified as requiring inpatient hospital treatment.

To address many of these issues, the focus must move away from simply separating and containing “difficult” and vulnerable prisoners, and towards seriously confronting the systemic issues that have led to the overuse of SRUs, and the all-too-common failure of reintegration efforts. The SPS, NHS, and the Scottish Government all have a role to play in this.

#### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

1. HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland, Wendy Sinclair-Gieben was appointed in July 2018.
2. On publication the report can be found at [www.prisoninspectoratescotland.gov.uk](http://www.prisoninspectoratescotland.gov.uk)
3. For further information please contact Kerry Love, Business Manager, at [Kerry.Love@gov.scot](mailto:Kerry.Love@gov.scot) or on 07939 980452.

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