



HMIPS

HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland
INSPECTING AND MONITORING

NEWS RELEASE

LIAISON VISIT TO HMP GREENOCK 9-10 MARCH 2021

This report is part of a programme of liaison visits of prisons carried out by HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland (HMIPS) during the COVID-19 pandemic emergency and was conducted under the [HMIPS - Liaison Visit Framework - Prison and Court Custody Units](#). These liaison visit reports provide assurance to Ministers and the wider public that scrutiny of the treatment and conditions in which prisoners are held has been continued during the pandemic.

It is greatly to the credit of the management and staff of HMP Greenock that at the time of our visit no one in their care had tested positive for COVID-19. Communication with prisoners about the pandemic was strong and efforts to promote family contact were solid. Health Improvement Scotland inspectors identified a range of good practice, including the decision to start testing for COVID-19 three days before a hospital admission and continued access to substance misuse and mental health services.

Despite these positives, a number of issues concerned inspectors. The primary concern is the ageing infrastructure of HMP Greenock and the unsuitable environment created by the fabric of the building. HMP Greenock is a Victorian establishment ill-suited to a modern prison system and accordingly in urgent need of replacement. The continuing gradual loss of residential accommodation, due to water ingress, is also deeply concerning in light of the pressure on prison cell capacity which is anticipated as court activity ramps up again and returns to normal. The Scottish Prison Service (SPS) are investigating options to address the problems of water ingress in the residential area but they are likely to be costly, and under current plans may only have a payback period of 10 years until a full replacement for HMP Greenock can be secured. We urge the Scottish Government and the SPS to find funding and consider alternatives that might provide a permanent or at least longer-term solution in a shorter timeframe and perhaps provide a more cost effective investment, without losing the positives of having a local prison and the strong staff prisoner relationships.

A robust permanent solution must be found in the interim for a number of issues; to prevent further ingress of water into healthcare settings and accommodation areas to minimise the risk of transmission of infection. The safer cells need to be upgraded to make them anti-ligature and more conducive to a caring environment, and the annex cells are in urgent need of upgrade. Privacy screens should also be installed around the toilets in Ailsa and Darroch Hall.

Consideration should be given to reopening Arran Hall to encourage more opportunities for progression and address the lack of accessible cells, which prevents progression to the Top End at HMP Greenock for anyone with severe mobility or other support issues. This in conjunction with the need for more accessible cells in other residential areas.

As we have observed in other prison liaison visits, restricted opportunities for progression were a major concern for prisoners in HMP Greenock, and the backlog of paperwork associated with progression and the speed of process for consideration of a grant of temporary release are of serious concern for HMIPS. More clarity should be provided for prisoners on progression and their housing arrangements on release.

Prison-based Social Work need access to SPS systems, particularly when having to work from home, so they are not inhibited from meeting their statutory responsibilities.

We wish to record our appreciation of the fact that Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership, along with the SPS, responded swiftly to the infection control issues that were immediately escalated, and note that the healthcare service returned to the health centre on 3 and 4 April 2021. Significant roof repair work has been undertaken since the liaison visit and internal refurbishment has also taken place with regard to damaged flooring, lighting and decor. We understand that a proposal is being developed to move the health centre to another building to support healthcare facilities in the longer-term. We will continue to monitor the progress of this and the impact on patient care. Welcome though this swift response has been, it does not detract from the need for more fundamental solutions to the significant infrastructural challenges which remain at HMP Greenock.

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.prisonsofscotland.gov.uk
3. For further information please contact Kerry Love, Business Manager, at Kerry.Love@gov.scot or on 07939 980452.