

Summary of inspection findings

Education Scotland HM Inspectors' contribution to the
inspection of Prisons in Scotland 2016 to 2020

October 2020

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Context

The inspection of prisons in Scotland is led by Her Majesty's Inspector of Prisons Scotland (HMIPS <https://www.prisoninspectorscotland.gov.uk/>). HMIPS lead institutional inspections, but also undertake a range of thematic and issue-based inspections and reviews. Full prison inspections involve multi-disciplinary teams from the following agencies:

- Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS)
- Education Scotland (ES)
- The Care Inspectorate (CI)
- The Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC)

The HMIPS [guidance for prison inspections in Scotland](#) is used by all inspectors including those from partner agencies. The standards, revised in May 2018, cover:

Standard 1: Lawful and Transparent Custody

Standard 2: Decency

Standard 3: Personal Safety

Standard 4: Effective, Courteous and Humane Exercise of Authority

Standard 5: Respect, Autonomy And Protection Against Mistreatment

Standard 6: Purposeful Activity

Standard 7: Transitions from Custody to Life in the Community

Standard 8: Organisational Effectiveness

Standard 9: Health and Wellbeing

Within this framework of standards, Education Scotland HM Inspectors use [standard 6 Purposeful Activity](#) to form their evaluations for details of the quality indicators used in this standard). The standard focuses on: training and work opportunities; how work opportunities are managed; the quality of educational opportunities; physical training and health opportunities; library provision, and cultural and self-help opportunities.

The inspection process is managed by HMIPS Inspectors and is underpinned by the [PANEL approach](#). These principles ensure a consistency of approach, and give a confidence that fairness and human rights underpin the process.

Each inspection process takes place over a two week period, and a small team of Education Scotland Post-16 HM Inspectors (normally two) contribute to the fieldwork in week one.

This report covers a full cycle of inspection over the three year period between March 2016, and October 2019. The published reports summarised in this report are detailed in [appendix 3](#).

Scotland has 15 prisons, 13 in the public sector and two privately run establishments. The summary findings in this report are organised using the six QIs evaluated by Education Scotland HM Inspectors.

Main Findings: Purposeful Activity

Quality Indicator 6.1

There is an appropriate and sufficient range of good quality employment and training opportunities available to prisoners. Prisoners are consulted in the planning of activities offered and their engagement is encouraged.

There is a similar core set of work and employment opportunities known as 'work parties' in all of the prisons, and these are designed to help a prison run more efficiently. These work parties include activities such as: catering; gardens; industrial cleaning; laundry; pass duties and recycling. All of the larger prisons have additional work parties such as hairdressing, cycle maintenance, joinery, and a few have more creative options such as media. There is a growing prison population of more elderly prisoners who have passed state retirement age and are not required to work, but many still chose to work. Working within a prison will generate an earned income for a prisoner of around £10-£12 per week. In some prisons, contract work involving external organisations, such as garden centres, attract higher rates of pay. In almost all instances, prison planning ensures sufficient work opportunities are available for those prisoners who chose to work, which is typically around 40-50% of the prison population. However, as staffing by prison officers can often be an issue, cancellation of work parties is common. There is an issue around sufficiency of work parties for those prisoners who wish to engage, and the more popular work parties will often involve waiting lists.

Many of the work parties also offer opportunities for the attainment of vocational qualifications. These can be useful in areas such as construction, industrial cleaning, or hospitality in helping prisoners prepare to enter the employment on release. One particularly good example is the offer of the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) site safety card in some prisons. Where vocational qualifications are on offer, the level of formal teaching is of a high standard, and delivered by prison officers who have a background in the sector or who have been appropriately trained in the delivery of programmes. There are a few examples of prisons, such as Low Moss, where work parties are linked to employability events to encourage prisoners to reflect on the opportunities for finding work on release. However, there are also a few examples, such as Inverness Prison where the opportunity for training or attainment of vocational qualifications is severely limited, and focussed primarily on the operational needs of the prison.

Equity of access to work parties can be challenging. For practical reasons, prisoners on work parties from different prisoner groups are not normally mixed. Protected and non-protected prisoners are not on the same work parties, and neither are male and female prisoners. This is a major limiting factor on the choice of work parties. For example, in Polmont, female prisoners were, in practice, limited to a choice of only two or three work parties.

The frequency of work party cancellations due to demands on prison officers time for other duties is a growing problem, often exacerbated by issues of staff absence. Prisons will understandably prioritise security, and officers who lead vocational work are often called to

cancel their work parties and are allocated to other duties. In a few prisons, some work parties were not active for several months due to staffing constraints.

A further constraint on the effectiveness of the work parties is sporadic prisoner attendance. On any given day, typically around a quarter of places will not be filled as prisoners have other commitments such as attending court or meeting with their lawyer, or choose not to attend on that day. This makes the planning and scheduling of work more challenging.

The level of prisoner consultation on work opportunities is variable, with around half the prisons offering little meaningful consultation on the work parties offered or the allocation process. However, informal consultation, individual discussions and formal feedback indicates a broad level of satisfaction with most of the options offered. In almost all work parties, within some establishments, waiting lists to attend are typically a few months.

What's working well?

- The quality of teaching and assessment in work parties.
- The provision of vocational qualifications, although they are not available in all prisons.

Where is the greatest potential for improvement?

- More consultation with prisoners on work party options.
- Greater focus on work party experience that may lead to employment, including the wider use of first aid, food hygiene and construction safety qualifications.
- The significant number of cancelled work parties as a result of staffing issues.

Quality Indicator 6.2

Prisoners participate in the system by which paid work is applied for and allocated. The system reflects the individual needs of the prisoner and matches the systems used in the employment market, where possible.

All prisons visited have an allocation system for matching prisoners to paid work. The systems are promoted through information provided at prisoner induction. Individual prisoners then apply for work. The options open to each prisoner vary and circumstances such as known enemies, level of risk and prior experience are all considered in the allocation process. Prisoner participation in this process is typically limited to making the application. However, in a few examples, such as Polmont, prisoners have an active engagement in planning the work parties.

In most prisons, an interview is arranged with the officer running the work party. The standards of work, requirements of the work, and opportunities for training are made clear. Overall, team working and discipline in the work parties reflect the employment market where practical.

The individual needs of the prisoners are given reasonable consideration in planning work opportunities. However, there is limited information regarding which work parties are more effective in helping prisoners find work on release. There is also little evidence that prisoners are guided well to engage in work parties which may be more useful as they approach release

dates. Useful work parties may help develop life skills such as cookery or provide entry level qualifications such as the CSCS certification. In a few prisons, such as Kilmarnock, there is a wide range of useful vocational qualifications on offer as prisoners near the end of their sentence. This would include qualifications in areas such as: fire safety; COSHH; industrial cleaning; construction safety; and forklift driving. However, this practice is not yet widespread across Scottish prisons.

What's working well?

- There are clear and well documented processes related to applying for and accessing a work party.
- There are reasonable waiting periods to find a place in a work party.

Where is the greatest potential for improvement?

- Having a clearer protocol to offer more useful work parties or qualifications near the end of sentences.

Quality Indicator 6.3

There is an appropriate and sufficient range of good quality educational activities available to the prisoners. Prisoners are consulted in the planning of activities offered and their engagement is encouraged.

The provision of education in prisons has been contracted out for many years. Initially the delivery of provision in Scotland was undertaken by two colleges; New College Lanarkshire and Fife College. However, since August 2017, all prison education provision has been contracted to Fife College. There was some disruption to the provision in the immediate period following the transfer to Fife College.

Educational opportunities are offered for all prisoner groups, however, uptake is variable. Prison educational opportunities, including those leisure activities occurring in the education unit, are taken up by around 40% of the prison population. Longer term and protected prisoners are far more likely to opt for education, and are far more likely to continue to attend when they do. Untried prisoners are not eligible to attend educational programmes. Prisoners are provided with an appropriate and sufficient range of good quality educational opportunities overall.

For most prisoners, learning activities meet their educational needs. There are a range of useful options offered from SCQF level 2 to SCQF level 9, although almost all opportunities are at levels 3-5. There are limited opportunities for prisoners with basic literacy and numeracy needs to get individual attention and limited peer tutoring available. This is a cause for concern as many prisoners have low levels of literacy and numeracy and those needs are often not addressed during their incarceration period. The quality of learning teaching and assessment within the learning centres is of a good standard in almost all prisons.

Learning centres can be basic, but are appropriately equipped for the classes being provided. The overall limitation of having no internet access within any prison constrains what can be offered, particularly in relation to information and communications technology (ICT) provision. There are often sufficient numbers of stand-alone desktop PCs. In most centres, the PCs are very old, slow, and need updating to reflect a more modern work and learning environment.

A significant amount of learning is formally accredited and the Fife College open learning platform supports a wide range of independent study options. The platform has been designed to offer an extensive range of short learning and assessment opportunities which prisoners can undertake independently or with limited support. There is also a small number of prisoners, typically around three to five people at any one prison, who follow distance learning programmes through college or Open University provision. In a number of writing and arts and crafts classes, prisoner artefacts are displayed at events and entered into competitions such as the Koestler Awards. There are also themes such as poetry days and family learning, where prisoners are recorded reading aloud and these are then played to their children at home. This is good for confidence and motivation.

In almost all prisons, there is relatively low attendance or uptake of spaces in the learning centres. In a typical month, around 50% of available spaces will remain unused. A small proportion of this relates to genuine reasons for absence such as legal or medical appointments. However, one major factor in this poor uptake of spaces is the support by prison staff on the residential wings to encourage or allow prisoners to attend. In many instances, officers being taken away for other prison duties limits the time for escorting prisoners to education.

What's working well?

- There is a high level of uptake of certificated qualifications.
- Where arts and crafts feature, having displays and national competitions is motivational.
- The quality of learning teaching and assessment.

Where is the greatest potential for improvement?

- Extending and promoting the offer to ensure the engagement of every prisoner group.
- Making good use of opportunities by encouraging and supporting greater attendance.
- There is a need for updated equipment and technology to better reflect the current employment market.
- Increased uptake of learning activities by those prisoners with low levels of literacy or numeracy.

Quality Indicator 6.4

There is an appropriate and sufficient range of physical and health educational activities available to the prisoners and they are afforded access to participate in sporting or fitness activities relevant to a wide range of interests, needs and abilities. Prisoners are consulted in the planning of activities offered and their engagement is encouraged.

All prisons have a well-equipped gym with suitable facilities for sports and healthy activity. The larger prisons also have smaller 'satellite gyms' available on the residential wings for prisoners to use on their own or outwith normal gym hours. In some of the larger prisons such as Glenochil, there is a programme of activities which covers evenings and weekends. Most prisons have good outdoor areas where constructive health and fitness activities are offered. These are used well when the weather improves and allows access for staff and prisoners.

In all prisons, prison officers who deliver physical training activities have a constructive and professional relationship with the prison population. This helps ensure that the safety and discipline required in gym based work is maintained. Attendance at all gym and sports related activity is very high, which is in striking contrast to most other purposeful activity.

There is a level of variation regarding more general health promotion. The programmes that are on offer are often carried out in partnership, and cover topics such as healthy eating, heart health and first aid. Where all prisons offer routine physical training, a few do not offer programmes to promote good health.

There are great variations regarding accreditation linked to health and physical training. In some prisons, a structured and certificated programme is central to their offer, and useful in motivating prisoners. In other prisons, this activity does not feature. Grampian and Glenochil prisons, for example, make good use of Dynamic Youth, Youth Achievement and the Duke of Edinburgh Awards. This gives useful structure, motivation and recognition to those who attend.

In a few prisons, there is a wide range of sports and activities on offer. This variety is attractive, and allows for the differing needs of the prison population such as female or more elderly prisoners, or protected prisoners and those currently on remand. This variety and responsiveness to need is useful in motivating and engaging all prison populations.

What's working well?

- Good productive relationships between prisoners and physical training officers.
- Very high levels of attendance at gym activities.
- Structured programmes of activity to motivate prisoners.

Where is the greatest potential for improvement?

- Ensuring better use of outside space for healthy activity.
- Encouraging and supporting all prisons to engage in health education activities.
- Ensuring elderly and reluctant prisoners attend and benefit from structured exercise activities

Quality Indicator 6.5

Prisoners are afforded access to a library which is well-stocked with materials that take account of the cultural and religious backgrounds of the prisoner population.

Every prison has a library, although these are of varying size and quality. Arrangements also vary considerably, with some libraries being curated through the local authority. The prisons with a local authority partnership such as Grampian and Perth provide greater choice, better support, and an overall more appropriate service. Access to the library, the quality of lending stock, and the support given to prisoners varies greatly across all prisons. In Glenochil for example, the library is used primarily for reference only and has limited stock. Prisoners have the right to access legal information, and information regarding their rights. This obligation has been met in all prisons.

The range of resources varies and the rotation of stock is better where arrangements are provided in conjunction with the local authority. In the best libraries, fiction, non-fiction, large print, different language, DVD, computer games, magazine and newspapers resources are

made available. Some libraries also engage in inter-library loans so prisoners can, in those instances, access almost any text.

Access to the library varies considerably by prisoner grouping within each institution. In most instances, there is limited or no access to the library for remand prisoners. Although some institutions have a concern that resources may not be returned if a prisoner moves on, in others, this has not proven to be a difficulty.

In the better libraries, there is an active promotion of reading, and the library is often the main driver for health, educational or equalities initiatives. Book Week, Meet The Author or writing competitions are used well. Thematic displays such as Mental Health or Armistice Day help engage prisoners in reading or researching new topics. In some prisons, library work parties will deliver books and DVDs to prisoners on the residential wings

What's working well?

- Libraries are generally well stocked with fiction books and DVDs.

Where is the greatest potential for improvement?

- Ensuring all prisoner groups, including remand prisoners, have access to library services.
- Ensuring all libraries engage in promotion of reading, learning and cultural events.

Quality Indicator 6.6

Prisoners have access to a variety of cultural, recreational, self-help or peer support activities that are relevant to a wide range of interests and abilities. Prisoners are consulted on the range of activities and their participation is encouraged.

There are significant differences in the level of cultural, recreational or self-help activities on offer within each prison. Often there is no formal designated area or lead person who will drive or coordinate this work. Where the education provision is often at the centre of these initiatives, the library or chaplaincy can often have a key role. In a few instances, individual officers or the prisoners themselves may support this work.

The education units will often drive work around cultural themes, encouraging art, poetry and discussion. Typical examples will include Burns Day, Armistice Day and Christmas activities. In many instances, artistic or written work can be entered for the Koestler Award competitions. Generally, the Scottish prisons who enter work for this award do well on a UK basis.

Peer support varies, and availability is often linked to the size of the prison. Peer support is normally offered in prison induction, education, and in mental health support. There is a limited number of prisoners whose circumstances would make them suitable as peer mentors, making this challenging to deliver. In each of these mentoring roles, the peer mentors are given formal training and support to do the work, and feedback suggests they discharge their roles well. However, there are typically only a few peer mentors in each prison, so the impact is limited.

The Chaplaincy service often provide personal support beyond meeting the religious needs of the prisoners. Chaplaincy services are well regarded, and seen as having a positive influence within the prison.

Consultation with prisoners on cultural, social or self-help activities is limited. This may be related to the lack of a designated area or lead person responsible for this work. However, in the larger institutions, the education unit often take the lead and in those instances there is a mechanism for gathering prisoner views and consulting on what is available.

What's working well?

- Established national initiatives such as the six book challenge, book week, and the Koestler Awards are motivational and helpful.
- Where peer mentors are in place, they are well trained, well supported and helpful.

Where is the greatest potential for improvement?

- Ensuring greater consistency in the number of cultural, recreational and self-help activities.
- Greater levels of consultation with prisoners on what cultural, recreational or self-help activities might be of interest or of value.

Summary of findings

What is working well

- The quality of teaching and assessment in work parties and education programmes
- The provision and uptake of vocational qualifications (where available)
- Clarity of processes related to applying for, and accessing work parties
- Where arts and crafts feature, the use of motivational displays and access to national competitions
- Relationships between prisoners and physical training staff.
- Levels of attendance at gym activities.
- Structured programmes of activity to motivate prisoners (where available)
- Well stocked libraries and initiatives to support literacy skills
- Well trained, and helpful peer mentoring schemes.

Aspects for improvement

- More opportunities to consult with prisoners on work party options
- Increased focus on work party experience that may lead to employment on release
- The frequency of work party cancellations as a result of staffing issues
- Clearer protocols for the offer of work parties or qualifications for prisoners nearing the end of sentences
- Extending and promoting the offer to ensure the engagement of every prisoner group
- Encouraging and supporting improved attendance at educational provision
- Updating of equipment and technology to better reflect the current employment market
- Ensuring better use of outside space for healthy activity
- Encouraging and supporting all prisoners to engage in health education activities
- Increasing uptake of learning activities by those prisoners with low levels of literacy or numeracy
- Ensuring all prisoner groups, including remand prisoners, have access to library services
- Ensuring all libraries engage in promotion of reading, learning and cultural events
- Ensuring greater consistency in the number of cultural, recreational and self-help activities
- More consultation with prisoners on the cultural, recreational or self-help activities on offer

Recommendation(s)

- Education Scotland should continue to work in partnership with HMIPS to evaluate the quality of purposeful activity within Scotland's prisons, and
- The findings of this report should inform future approaches to scrutiny of the range, sufficiency and impact of purposeful activity offered to Scotland's prison population.

Appendix 1 HMIPS Standard 6

<https://www.prisoninspectorscotland.gov.uk/publications/inspecting-and-monitoring-standard-6-purposeful-activity>

All prisoners are encouraged to use their time in prison constructively. Positive family and community relationships are maintained. Prisoners are consulted in planning the activities offered.

The prison assists prisoners to use their time purposefully and constructively and provides a broad range of activities, opportunities and services based on the profile of needs of the prisoner population. Prisoners are supported to maintain positive relationships with family and friends in the community. Prisoners have the opportunity to participate in recreational, sporting, religious and cultural activities. Prisoners' sentences are managed appropriately to prepare them for returning to their community.

QUALITY INDICATORS (QI)

6.1 There is an appropriate and sufficient range of good quality employment and training opportunities available to prisoners. Prisoners are consulted in the planning of activities offered and their engagement is encouraged.

6.2 Prisoners participate in the system by which paid work is applied for and allocated. The system reflects the individual needs of the prisoner and matches the systems used in the employment market, where possible.

6.3 There is an appropriate and sufficient range of good quality educational activities available to the prisoners. Prisoners are consulted in the planning of activities offered and their engagement is encouraged.

6.4 There is an appropriate and sufficient range of physical and health educational activities available to the prisoners and they are afforded access to participate in sporting or fitness activities relevant to a wide range of interests, needs and abilities. Prisoners are consulted in the planning of activities offered and their engagement is encouraged.

6.5 Prisoners are afforded access to a library which is well-stocked with materials that take account of the cultural and religious backgrounds of the prisoner population.

6.6 Prisoners have access to a variety of cultural, recreational, self-help or peer support activities that are relevant to a wide range of interests and abilities. Prisoners are consulted on the range of activities and their participation is encouraged.

Appendix 2 PANEL Principles

PARTICIPATION:

- Are prisoners involved in decisions made about their activity programme?
- Are there effective lines of communication between the prison and the prisoners regarding decisions taken?
- Is prisoner participation prioritised in decisions about the programmes, activities and courses on offer?
- Do prisoners feel able to participate and do they know they are entitled to do so?

ACCOUNTABILITY:

- Does the prison monitor and review the services and activities on offer with regard to the needs of the prisoners in the establishment?
- Is the prison proactive in responding to the individual needs of prisoners in terms of their sentence management?
- Where prisoner participation in Purposeful Activity is low, does the prison investigate the reasons for this and seek to remedy the issue?
- Are remedies provided in the event that rights are infringed upon?

NON-DISCRIMINATION AND EQUALITY:

- Are those prisoners who are most vulnerable, marginalised or who have a protected characteristic identified and appropriately supported?
- How do vulnerable prisoners or those with a protected characteristic engage with and experience Purposeful Activity?
- Are reasonable adjustments made for the most vulnerable and marginalised to enable them to fully participate in Purposeful Activity?
- Is the impact of policies upon those who are most vulnerable and those with protected characteristics analysed and reviewed?

EMPOWERMENT:

- Does the prison provide support for prisoners who require extra assistance to participate in Purposeful Activity?
- Are staff proactive in identifying prisoners who face barriers to participation?
- Are prisoners aware of their entitlements, the support available and do they feel able to request the support they require?
- Are prisoners placed at the centre of any decisions made regarding Purposeful Activity?

LEGALITY:

HMIPS expect that all approaches to Purposeful Activity are grounded in human rights law and in conformity with the Scottish Prison Rules. There are a number of rights which underpin this standard including the Right to Private and Family Life (Article 8 ECHR) which relates to QIs such as those about visits, education, work and the library. Freedom of Thought Conscience and Religion (Article 9 ECHR) is also important in relation to the observance of religion. Lastly, under the Right to Liberty (Article 5 ECHR) there is a duty upon the state to facilitate the rehabilitation and release of prisoners. Standard 7 allows HMIPS to inspect and monitor how the state carries this out.

Appendix 3 Prison reports used

Title	Type	Published date
Report on Full Inspection of HMP Glenochil: 19 April - 10 May 2019	Full Inspection Report	October 2019
Report on Full Inspection of HMP & YOI Grampian: 4 - 15 February 2019	Full Inspection Report	July 2019
Report on Full Inspection of HMP YOI Polmont - 29 October to 2 November 2018	Full Inspection Report	May 2019
Report on HMP Addiewell 6-17 August 2018	Full Inspection Report	January 2019
Report on Full Inspection of HMP Perth - 14-25 May 2018	Full Inspection Report	October 2018
Report on HMP Greenock 19 February - 2 March 2018	Full Inspection Report	June 2018
Report on HMP Inverness 13-24 November 2017	Full Inspection Report	March 2018
Report on HMP Shotts 21 August - 1 September 2017	Full Inspection Report	December 2017
Report on HMP Low Moss 29 May - 9 June 2017	Full Inspection Report	October 2017
Report on Full Inspection of HMP Edinburgh - 6-17 March 2017	Full Inspection Report	June 2017
Report on HMP Kilmarnock	Full Inspection Report	March 2017
Report on Longitudinal Inspection of HMP YOI Polmont - 19 to 21 April 2016	Full Inspection Report	August 2016
Report on Full Inspection of HMP & YOI Grampian - 30 Nov to 8 Dec 2015	Full Inspection Report	May 2016
Report on Full Inspection of HMP YOI Cornton Vale - 28 Sept- 7 Oct 2015	Full Inspection Report	March 2016

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