

HM Inspector of Prisons – Annual report issued

✘ Scotland's prisons are safe and well run with exceptionally diligent staff looking after prisoners with professionalism and commitment, but a number of important issues remain unresolved, according to Brigadier Hugh Monro, Chief Inspector of Prisons, in his first annual report published today.

Looking back over his first year in post, Brigadier Monro's report also highlights:

- * Extensive redevelopment work across the prison estate means conditions for prisoners and staff have improved
- * There is a lot of good practice across prisons, though this is not always shared with other prisons
- * Specialists such as teachers and nurses are further contributing to the high standards in prisons

However, the report raises a number of concerns, including:

- * High rates of positive drug testing, with an average of 17.5 per cent of prisoners released from the closed establishment testing positive for drugs
- * Great concern remains over the failure to address the practice of slopping out at Peterhead prison
- * Particular concern around conditions at Cornton Vale and that insufficient attention is being paid to this group of offenders
- * In general, there are not enough prisoners undertaking gainful activity on a regular basis
- * There is no evidence as to the effectiveness of interventions or programmes to address offending behaviour and prepare prisoners for release

Brigadier Monro said:-“Having visited every establishment in Scotland, I believe the prison system is on the whole

operating safely and effectively. In particular, I have been very impressed with the quality of staff who are highly professional and committed to the care of prisoners.

“The major redevelopment programme of four of Scotland’s largest prisons has provided a significant improvement in facilities for both prisoners and staff alike.

“Nevertheless, six other prisons remain largely unchanged. Peterhead’s sanitation system means it remains the only prison from the ‘slopping out’ era. Despite this issue being raised by my predecessor in 2006, I regret that this continues and presents a significant strategic risk.

“The smuggling of drugs, mobile phones and weapons into prisons remains unacceptably high. This activity makes prisons less safe, enables criminal activity to continue and causes bullying and intimidation. Indeed, with an average of 17.5 per cent of prisoners testing positive for drugs upon release, it seems wasteful to spend public money on addiction programmes when security breaches are simply allowing drug use to continue.

“My report also highlights the need for a national strategy in relation to the preparation of prisoners for release. Reducing re-offending is a key priority for the Scottish Prison Service and I am concerned that current guidance is fragmented and piecemeal. Additionally, the availability of programmes designed to reduce re-offending and the lack of prisoners partaking in gainful activity further reduces attempts to address the underlying causes of offending.”

Although he had visited all of Scotland’s prisons within the first five weeks of his appointment Brigadier Monro did not single out the capital’s prison at Saughton for any particular comment.

You can read the whole report here. [HM Inspector of Prisons Report](#)