

HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland

Report on HMYOI Polmont

SUMMARY

Follow-up Inspection
24 - 28 March 2014

KEY FACTS

Location

Her Majesty's Young Offenders Institution (HMYOI) Polmont lies three miles south east of Falkirk on the B805 road in Central Scotland.

Role

HMYOI Polmont is Scotland's national facility for those male young adults between 16 and 21 years of age who are awaiting trial and convicted young offenders serving all sentence lengths up to and including life. The average sentence length is between two and four years.

Design Capacity/ Population held at time of Inspection

It is the largest Young Offenders Institution in Britain with a design capacity of 760 spaces. At the time of the follow up inspection there was a total of 519 young offenders in HMYOI Polmont of which 170 were untried, 256 were short-term offenders, 80 long-term offenders and 13 serving life sentences.

Accommodation

The establishment was rebuilt and completed in 2010. There are now three large accommodation units; Iona and Monro Halls and Blair House. There is also a 14 cell Separation and Reintegration Unit call Dunedin Hall.

Healthcare Provider - NHS Forth Valley

Learning Provider - Carnegie College

HM CHIEF INSPECTOR'S OVERVIEW

HMYOI Polmont was last inspected in October 2012. The resulting report, published in January 2013, contained 74 recommendations for improvement and identified nine areas of good practice.

Eighteen months later, this follow-up inspection revisited HMYOI Polmont to assess the actions which had been taken to address the recommendations and to report on the progress made.

It is apparent that a great deal of progress has been made in HMYOI Polmont over the last year, resulting in positive improvements to many aspects of life for the young offenders. We assess that 51 recommendations have been achieved, 18 partially achieved and five not yet achieved. All nine areas of good practice have been maintained.

HMYOI Polmont is part way through a significant organisational change to create a learning environment for all its young offenders. This is an ambitious programme which seeks to transform the lives of the young offenders, to improve their prospects for successful resettlement on release. I commend the Governor for setting out so clearly the strategic direction for HMYOI Polmont and recognising that this is a long-term journey.

It is clear that a strategic approach to working with external agencies has been developed. The partnership with Education Scotland is a significant factor in delivering improvements. I particularly welcome the increase in staff training and the raising of awareness amongst all staff of the changes at HMYOI Polmont. I acknowledge, too, the levels of financial investment in both capital and staff resourcing. HMYOI Polmont has benefited from a reduction in its population of young offenders and a greater level of management stability since the last inspection.

I was pleased to see improvements in the involvement of families in the induction process and the progress being made to provide a Family Help Hub at HMYOI Polmont. Healthcare provision continues to be positive, with a greater emphasis on health promotion.

At a time of significant change, it is important to maintain a focus on the day to day requirements of running a successful young offenders institution. There remain for HMYOI Polmont challenges in addressing some of the issues from the full inspection report. There is perhaps an inevitable tension between seeking to transform the young offenders and maintaining control. An historical emphasis on the latter has resulted in a culture where time out of cell, access to recreation and to showers are limited, in some halls more than others. This is still so, despite the reduction in the number of young offenders detained in HMYOI Polmont. Time spent in the open air by most young offenders remains particularly poor.

Work is still required to change the culture, so that all staff are working towards the strategic direction of HMYOI Polmont. The provision of physical training (PT) at evenings and weekends needs to be improved. There is scope, too, to increase the

usage of the activity spaces in the workshops, and to maximise participation in work and vocational training.

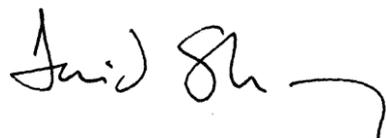
Summary

Overall, HMYOI Polmont has made significant progress since the last full inspection. I recognise that it is still at an early stage of the change in strategic direction. I was pleased to note generally positive relationships between staff and young offenders. There is considerable potential for the Personal Officers to deliver positive change in the lives of the young offenders.

I look forward to seeing continued progress at HMYOI Polmont and will continue to monitor the changes over the next 12 months.

David Strang, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons says:

“Progress can be seen in relation to many of the recommendations made in the full inspection report published in January 2013 and there is evidence of on-going attempts to address a number more. The drop in the prisoner population within Polmont since the time of the full inspection in October 2012 down from 630 to 519 has improved the living conditions in general with the whole establishment being less crowded. This results in greater opportunity to access activities, learning and work for young offenders.”

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Strang', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

DAVID STRANG QPM
HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

Prisoners can obtain a copy of the full inspection report from prison staff or from their prison library.

Inspection reports can be found online at: www.scotland.gov.uk/hmip.

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