

## Longitudinal Inspection

**HMYOI Polmont**

**19-21 April 2016**

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## **CONTENTS**

Terms of Reference	1
Introduction by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland	2
Decency	5
Personal Safety	7
Humane use of authority	11
Respect	14
Education and Learning	17
Purposeful Activity	21
Transitions	24
Professor McAra's brief and observations	27
Annex A Professor McAra's evidence gathering	36
Annex B Population breakdown of HMYOI Polmont on 31 May 2016	38
Annex C Inspection Team	39
Annex D Acronyms	40

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

As a result of the announcement by Michael Matheson MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Justice, on 11 February 2016 that approximately 110 female prisoners from HMP & YOI Cornton Vale are to transfer to HMYOI Polmont in the summer of 2016, David Strang, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland, announced that he would undertake a series of inspections in HMYOI Polmont and HMP & YOI Cornton Vale.

The first inspection took place in April 2016 over a three day period with the following objectives:

- to identify the progress made by HMYOI Polmont against the recommendations made in the full inspection carried out in October 2012, and the follow-up inspection undertaken in March 2014;
- to establish a baseline of delivery against their published objectives and a number of the HMIPS' Standards for Inspecting and Monitoring Prisons in Scotland; and
- in addition, the Chief Inspector will seek an overview and understanding of the plans for the introduction of the females into HMYOI Polmont.

During the Autumn of 2016, after the transfer of the females to HMYOI Polmont, the inspection team will visit HMP & YOI Cornton Vale to assess any impact of the regime available to the females that remain there.

The second inspection will be undertaken over a five day period in January 2017 and will have two primary objectives:

1. to assess to what extent the regime available for the young men has remained comparable to that found in April 2016; and
2. evaluate if the regime available to females offers equivalent levels of support, challenge and variety, as that available in HMP & YOI Cornton Vale.

The third inspection will be a full inspection of the now established regime, undertaken over a two week period utilising HMIPS' Standards for Inspecting and Monitoring Prisons in Scotland which will be programmed into the 2017-2018 inspection calendar.

## **INTRODUCTION BY HM CHIEF INSPECTOR OF PRISONS FOR SCOTLAND**

This report of an inspection of HMYOI Polmont in April 2016 followed the announcement by the Cabinet Secretary for Justice that over 100 women would be transferring from HMP & YOI Cornton Vale to HMYOI Polmont during the summer of 2016. This was the first in a series of inspections of HMYOI Polmont between 2016 and 2018. It was designed to assess the current conditions and treatment of the young men and to identify the progress that had been made since the last HMIPS inspection in 2014.

I am particularly grateful to Professor Lesley McAra of the University of Edinburgh who accompanied the inspection team. She brought her invaluable experience from the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime, and provided insightful observations to assist the inspection process.

### **Vision**

In 2014 the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) published an impressive and clear “Vision for Young People in Custody”. Its purpose is “to use the time a young person spends in custody to enable them to prepare for a positive future”. This is a progressive and ambitious Vision for young people in custody. It is in line with the Scottish Government’s “Getting it right for every child” (GIRFEC) strategy and is designed to underpin every aspect of life in HMYOI Polmont.

It was clear to us during the inspection that staff had understood and bought into the direction set out in the Vision. There was a thirst amongst staff to understand better how their own contribution could make a difference to the outcomes for the young men in HMYOI Polmont. I was encouraged to see that considerable progress had been made since the last HMIPS inspection of HMYOI Polmont in March 2014. Both staff and young men commented on the positive progress that had been made at HMYOI Polmont in the last three years.

There had been significant investment in the two activities areas, creating bright, fit-for-purpose areas for learning and development. Such investment has communicated to the young men at HMYOI Polmont that real opportunities for change are being offered to them. Right across HMYOI Polmont we saw excellent examples of positive engagement where young people were being given the chance to benefit from opportunities to change significant aspects of their lives. Committed and dedicated staff were making a real difference to the life opportunities and decisions for the young men.

### **Challenges**

Whilst it was encouraging to see significant progress being made in implementing the Vision for young people at HMYOI Polmont, there remained some important challenges for the leadership team. I would like to highlight two areas in particular: firstly, engagement; and secondly, the tension between security/control and care/learning.

There was, perhaps inevitably, a gap between the ambition articulated in the Vision and the implementation of the operational plans. In particular we found a lack of engagement in the opportunities for many of the young men at HMYOI Polmont. For those who did take part, the positive benefits were very clear. Despite significant investment in the activities areas, it was disappointing to note that only just over a third of the population engaged constructively in daily activities. A sizable proportion of the young men spent extended periods of the day locked in their cells. The challenge for HMYOI Polmont is to create an environment which encourages young men to engage with the opportunities available for them. This needs to go beyond simply making the activities available on the timetable.

Staff, too, need to be engaged in the changes which are taking place. They need to feel that they are central to the planned changes and that the changes are not being done to them. Higher than average levels of staff sickness absence add pressures to the workforce as a whole.

Secondly, developing a culture where young men take responsibility for making constructive decisions about their lives requires encouragement and a level of trust in relationships. Such a culture is potentially undermined if the young men are afforded limited opportunity to exercise such responsibility. We found a widespread belief among staff at all levels throughout HMYOI Polmont that the young men could not be trusted to behave responsibly. This led to a mind-set that high levels of control needed to be exercised over them.

Security, safety, and order are, of course, very important. But a disproportionate emphasis on control at the expense of opportunities to socialise and demonstrate constructive behaviour may well undermine the ambition to enable young men to prepare for a positive future. We noted that an apparent overemphasis on security had an adverse impact on decisions about recreation, time in the fresh air and communal dining, all of which were restricted by a fear or expectation that too many young men together would result in disorder or assaults. I would like to see the balance between these two elements redressed in a way that would encourage engagement and responsibility. Without in any way compromising security and safety, HMYOI Polmont should seek to encourage the whole population to participate actively in more activities outwith their cells.

Finally, the recently introduced process for developing Positive Future Plans (PFPs) for the young men has the potential to play a significant role in supporting rehabilitation and reintegration. It was clear that the role of the personal officer in the residential halls was not yet fully established. There is a need for better understanding of the role, to enable staff to build on the positive relationships which exist with many of the young men.

## **Next Steps**

The arrival of women being transferred from HMP & YOI Cornton Vale to HMYOI Polmont over the summer months of 2016 will represent a challenge for the staff at HMYOI Polmont. Plans are being developed to enable a smooth transition and successful integration of the new population. HM Inspectorate of Prisons for

Scotland will return to HMYOI Polmont in early 2017 to monitor the changes that have taken place.

It is hoped that the positive developments which have been achieved for the young men will continue to be in place and that the improvements which are planned will have been embedded in practice. I would hope to see that the recently introduced regime changes will have resulted in increased out-of-cell activities and a greater level of engagement in purposeful activities across the establishment. There should also be evidence of the expansion of the learning environment into the residential halls and greater levels of engagement of personal officers to support real change in the outcomes for young men.

This report contains the findings of the inspection team, broadly covering six of the HMIPS' Standards for Inspecting and Monitoring Prisons in Scotland. Because of the nature of this shorter inspection, we have not graded our assessments but hope that the narrative nature of the report is a constructive contribution to the development of HMYOI Polmont.

There is a great deal to be encouraged by at HMYOI Polmont, with many positive changes having been made. There remain considerable challenges to be addressed which, when tackled, will enable HMYOI Polmont to have a greater impact on the lives of the young men and thereby to contribute to a safer Scotland.

**David Strang**  
HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland

August 2016

## **DECENCY**

**The prison supplies the basic requirements of decent life to the prisoners. The prison provides to all prisoners the basic physical requirements for a decent life. All buildings, rooms, outdoor spaces and activity areas are of adequate size, well maintained, appropriately furnished, clean and hygienic. Each prisoner has a bed, bedding and suitable clothing, has good access to toilets and washing facilities, is provided with necessary toiletries and cleaning materials, and is properly fed. These needs are met in ways that promote each prisoner's sense of personal and cultural identity and self-respect.**

### **Inspection findings**

Within the last decade HMYOI Polmont had been completely redeveloped, with new buildings and facilities providing fit-for-purpose accommodation, with the one possible exception of the residential facilities for older children. The residential accommodation was well-designed to modern standards and created an environment that was bright, clean and well-ventilated. Considerable thought had been put into the colour scheme and decoration of all areas of the institution. In particular there had been significant investment in the two activities blocks where learning, training and related activities took place. This supported the overall ethos of HMYOI Polmont to develop a learning environment which sought to encourage the transformation of the lives of the young men.

Cleanliness was of a high standard throughout the institution with levels of graffiti low. The young men had regular access to cleaning materials and were encouraged to keep their cells clean and tidy. Young men on pass duties kept the communal areas to a high level of cleanliness with suitable systems for training, supervising and auditing cleaning activities in place.

The basics for a decent life were supplied satisfactorily in HMYOI Polmont. Cells which had an in-cell toilet, were sufficiently sizable for both single occupancy and where they were shared, with enough space for both storage and movement. Beds were fit-for-purpose with sufficient bedding of a suitable standard available. The young men had access to suitable clothing which was maintained to a good standard, and were able to get their clothes, towels and bedding washed regularly. One or two young men told us that occasionally their clothes were not dry on return from the laundry, but in general laundry arrangements were found to be satisfactory. Communal showers were available in the halls or the gymnasium.

The one area assessed under this Standard which did not meet with positive comment related to the provision of meals. In the main, meals were eaten in cells, with the young men collecting their food from the hall serveries and returning directly to their cells. Despite there being facilities to allow eating in the communal areas, these were only used by those on pass duties. This absence of communal dining appeared to be an opportunity lost to encourage positive social interactions.

A four week cycle of menu operated, which allowed a choice of meals but the variety and range seemed quite limited. Chips were frequently on the menu in response to requests from the young men, but they were often unappealing at the time and place

of serving. The kitchen staff acknowledged that there were challenges in keeping food fresh when it was transported in trolleys from the kitchens to the residential halls so long in advance of serving. Those serving the food had been trained in hygiene and health, and wore suitable protective clothing. Those with special dietary requirements for medical or religious reasons were catered for.

In summary, our inspection found that the young men at HMYOI Polmont were held in decent conditions and their basic physical needs were met satisfactorily. There remained a need to improve the quality of the food at the point of serving and the reintroduction of some form of communal dining should be a priority.

## **PERSONAL SAFETY**

**The prison takes all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of all prisoners. All appropriate steps are taken to minimise the levels of harm to which prisoners are exposed. Appropriate steps are taken to protect prisoners from harm from others or themselves. Where violence or accidents do occur, the circumstances are thoroughly investigated and appropriate management action taken.**

### **Inspection findings**

There were a number of positive initiatives running within HMYOI Polmont to ensure the personal safety of young men in its care. The Community Safety Unit (CSU), with SPS, the Third Sector and Police Scotland working together to deliver a number of initiatives to the young men. The delivery of the Leadership Programme to those on remand in Iona Hall provided an opportunity for engagement with a group who had restricted access to constructive activity, and the “in hall” delivery helped to encourage those who otherwise may not have engaged to participate. There were several examples of positive working relationships between officers and young men in all areas of the institution. While there appeared to have been a welcome drop in serious incidences of violence compared to the previous year, the overall rate of incidences of violence had remained fairly static in proportion to the population.

Where incidences of violence occurred, there was a swift response by staff to ensure the safety of those involved. The Orderly Room was used both as a sanction and as an opportunity to explore underlying reasons for violence, with referrals made to the CSU and other appropriate partners. However access to physical exercise was withdrawn in two Orderly Rooms observed. There was no reference to the withdrawal of physical exercise within the system of privileges as would be required by The Prison Rules - Rule 119 (1)(b)/Rule 49. It was unclear even if this were the case whether there was provision within the Prison Rules to allow for the removal of access to physical exercise via the Orderly Room. Given the particular status given to access to physical recreation for young men by virtue of Rule 89, this practice should be reviewed.

A new anti-bullying strategy, launched towards the end of 2014, was yielding some positive result. For example, the delivery of “Respect Me” sessions to all sentenced young men, with those who had attended reflecting on their increased understanding of bullying behaviours (particularly around comments that may be dismissed as banter). It would be helpful for these sessions to be delivered to all young men admitted on remand (although it should be noted that some of those on remand had covered similar material within the Leadership Programme). In addition, Youth Work delivered sessions on gender and equality and diversity. There had clearly been a focus to train staff when the new anti-bullying strategy had been launched, however, the last recorded training had taken place more than a year ago. While there had been some referrals made to the CSU as a result of bullying behaviours, the numbers were small - less than 10 were found since the launch of the strategy. Whilst there was good oversight of incidences of violence or risk through the Tactical Tasking and Co-ordination Group, and other formal forums within HMYOI Polmont, it may be beneficial to convene a multi-disciplinary group with a specific remit to

oversee, monitor and review the efficacy of the anti-bullying strategy – both in responding to incidences of bullying and crucially in exploring how to create an environment which minimised the occurrence of bullying in the first place.

There was evidence of on-going restorative justice work taking place which was positive. Restorative practices were generally deployed as a result of incidences of violence, or due to young men requesting to be removed from enemies lists due to the restrictions this placed on access to visits and purposeful activity. However, there were still significant numbers of young men marked as “keep separates” which both ran the risk of masking serious issues where they exist and of preventing young men from developing their capacity to deal with situations of conflict and disagreement in constructive ways.

There was clearly some very positive work being carried out and this could be enhanced through more effective oversight and co-ordination. Both Youth Work and the CSU received referrals for violence or diversity related work via print outs from PR2 (the SPS electronic prisoner records system – version 2) or the weekly collation of incidents from the Intelligence Management Unit, which would suggest a lack of a co-ordinated response involving personal officers. In addition, the CSU routinely picked up work that could have been carried out by personal officers, thereby enabling them to concentrate on more complex cases or on the more proactive group work. Examples were found of young men having verbal altercations or issuing threats which resulted in them being placed pre-emptively on the keep separate list and then referred to the CSU for interventions, rather than restorative work being carried out by residential officers. Referrals to the CSU also by their nature entailed a delay between the incidence and the restorative work. Whilst this may be beneficial following more serious incidences, in those situations involving verbal altercations or threats a more timely response, led by residential officers, may be more effective in reducing risks and distress to those involved, and in reducing the use of a “keep separates” list.

There was evidence of positive work involving personal officers and other partners such as Speech and Language Therapy and the Mental Health Team in the care of young men who may be at heightened risk from others. However, this seemed to depend upon individual referrals that were not always co-ordinated through either the PFP or an individualised care plan.

This was a common theme: pockets of excellent work occurring with young men, but not always within a comprehensive and coherent framework that could ensure such work was appropriately followed up, communicated and linked in to an overall plan.

In relation to foreign nationals there was evidence of some good practice within the reception area, with an appropriate use of interpretation services and provision of information, with officers in other areas showing positive intentions in managing and supporting those with extremely limited (or no) English. However, there were examples of young men whose language had been annotated incorrectly as English on PR2 and evidence of cell sharing risk assessments and induction interviews being carried out without the services of an interpreter. In one case another young man (who himself had limited English) had been asked to interpret for others during interviews. This was inappropriate, particularly at the point of admission where it

would not have been possible to confidently ascertain the nature of the relationship between the young men involved. It was not sufficient during such a discussion for a young man to have enough English to understand basic questions asked – this should be an opportunity to have a proper discussion about them and any concerns they may have about coming into custody, especially if this was for the first time.

Young men for whom English was not their first language should always be afforded the use of an interpreter for admission, first night, and induction interviews, and for any risk assessments or case conferences carried out. The admission flat in Iona did not have a speaker telephone to enable three way conversations between an officer, a young man and an interpreter to be carried out which would suggest that this did not happen routinely. The use of tools such as Google Translate should not be relied upon in communicating with young men with limited or no English. Despite this issue being raised during the inspection, a follow-up check on PR2 identified another young man with a note stating that although his English was not good, an induction interview had been carried out without use of an interpreter.

During the inspection a young man under the age of 18 was being held in the remand area in Iona Hall. Whilst this had been done in the best interests of the individual, there had been no multi-disciplinary case conference to ratify the decision taken on admission, or to consider whether any additional support measures needed to be put in place. In all cases where it was considered that it may be in the best interests of a young man to be located outwith accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds, a multi-disciplinary case conference (ideally with input from the relevant social work authority under the Whole Systems Approach<sup>1</sup>) should be convened at the earliest opportunity following admission to fully consider the risks, benefits and additional supports required in taking such a decision.

Generally, arrangements for sentenced young men on admission appeared robust. However, for those on remand there were incidences where young men stated that they had been unable to contact family members or their legal representative, generally due to a lack of understanding around the processes required to do so (for example, not knowing how to request a telephone call in cases where young men had no access to Prisoners Personal Cash). In any such cases encountered, officers were quick to respond and to ensure that young men were supported.

HMYOI Polmont was a safe institution where incidences of serious violence were rare. There were many examples of positive working relationships between staff and young men which contribute to this and of initiatives such as the CSU and Youth Work which promoted a positive and safe environment. However, there was also an extensive use of keep separate lists, physical measures of control and limited opportunities for young men to deal in a constructive manner with conflict and disagreement whilst in custody. While the approach taken was understandable, and had at its heart a desire to keep young men safe, the disproportionate use of physical security as a means of control had significant and pervasive repercussions

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<sup>1</sup> The Whole System Approach (WSA) is the Scottish Government's programme for addressing the needs of young people involved in offending.

for the aims of an institution which was clearly striving hard to place GIRFEC<sup>2</sup> and learning at its core.

HMYOI Polmont must explore ways to gradually and safely rebalance its use of control.

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<sup>2</sup> Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) is the national approach in Scotland to improving outcomes and supporting the wellbeing of our children and young people by offering the right help at the right time from the right people.

## **HUMANE USE OF AUTHORITY**

**The prison performs the duties both to protect the public by detaining prisoners in custody and to respect the individual circumstances of each prisoner by maintaining order effectively, with courtesy and humanity.**

**The prison ensures that the thorough implementation of security and supervisory duties is balanced by courteous and humane treatment of prisoners and visitors to the prison. The level of security and supervision is not excessive.**

### **Inspection findings**

It is vital that the risk any young man presents to themselves is assessed and appropriate supervision applied as required by ACT2Care (SPS suicide prevention strategy). Rather than just reviewing the processes and procedures in place, we spoke with a number of young men who were, or who had recently been, supported in this way. Encouragingly, one young man stated that officer involvement to support his self-harming had made him realise that they were there to support him and this resulted in a lasting positive change in his relationship with staff. The process in place at HMYOI Polmont is safe.

Each residential area had a number of safer cells, which had different furniture configuration. Of slight concern was the existence of some cells with no furniture where the mattress was placed directly onto the floor. This situation, as well as the overall cleanliness of the safer cells should be reviewed. All safer cells examined were already prepared with appropriate safer clothing and foot coverings which was positive.

Training records showed that competence levels were lower than required. The local ACT2Care Group, which had a good cross section of attendees, had noted this and plans were in place to address this situation.

Valuable property was stored in a number of filing cabinets within a separate room in reception. These cabinets were not locked and all staff had keys to the room: this situation should be reviewed. All other property was suitably stored within racks. A good stock of clothing was maintained (including jackets for inclement weather for those being liberated) and shoes, for use by those who require them. There were also suits of various sizes which young men could use for attending court. This was appreciated by one young man who was going to court the day after the inspection and until then, had nothing suitable to wear.

At the time of inspection around one-fifth of the population had a completed property mandate to hand property out at a visit. Although the system worked well it appeared convoluted. While exceptions had been made, the system was currently predicated on getting visits to hand property out, this situation should be reviewed. Property-related complaints were dealt with quickly and appropriately.

The admission process involved SPS, NHS and peer mentors attending reception automatically for all new admissions. This approach appeared to be appreciated and

worked well. Interactions between staff and the young men were professional and respectful. There would, however, be merit in considering whether a peer mentor should be based permanently within reception. Interestingly, HMYOI Polmont was piloting a new body scanner which meant it did mean that young men were not automatically strip searched. This was positive.

The admission process within Blair 3 (for a 16 year old) was supportive and friendly. A good description of the cell, the first night procedures and the use of cell call system was given. All young men who were new to HMYOI Polmont were given an admission pack. This consisted of underwear, along with some refreshments and included tobacco for over 18 year olds who smoked.

The two individuals we witnessed being liberated were treated professionally and with respect. However, given the ethos and vision for young men, it was unexpected and disappointing that these individuals were liberated via the vehicle gate.

Rather than the Orderly Room being a function to solely deal with breach of discipline, it was explained that work had commenced to maximise the case management opportunities that could present at the same time. A number of Orderly Rooms were witnessed and while not yet a formalised process, this ethos was evident. However, staff were called “Mr”, which felt rather formal against a more inclusive ethos. It was unfortunate that procedural issues presented in relation to resuming proceedings that had been adjourned, resulted in two of the cases being dismissed.

Care should be taken when noting the outcome of Orderly Room appeals as there were three occasions where the details in the “Outcome” and “Outcome Comments” columns differed.

The processes and procedures for those held out of circulation under Rule 95 was well-managed. As well as the usual Rule 95 case conferences, a multi-disciplinary case meeting was held within Dunedin each week, chaired by a Unit Manager. Although those involved were aware of what had been agreed, it was noted that there did not appear to be any formal capture or means of checking progress of the actions. Where relevant, more intensive support was available within Dunedin and this included intervention from HMYOI Polmont’s Community Safety Unit and the completion of violence workbooks.

There were usually two Risk Management Team (RMT) meetings per month to consider progression cases, and one per month for risk cases. The meeting was multi-disciplinary in nature with at least one officer from the young man’s hall in attendance. While the young men could attend these meetings, this did not happen routinely. Whilst it was explained that this was often because those involved in the RMT were fully aware of the circumstances of each case and discussions held with the young man beforehand, their attendance at these meetings should be encouraged and routine.

Substance misuse testing was undertaken by seven trained staff. There was currently no central drug testing area, although a business case had been submitted

in respect of this. While the number of quarterly drug tests could fluctuate, it was unclear how many tests had been abandoned. Record keeping should be reviewed.

The Head of Operations, or the Operations Unit Manager, reviewed all use of force forms and all logs appeared to be up-to-date. Physical restraints had not been used within HMYOI Polmont for some years.

## **RESPECT**

**A climate of mutual respect exists between staff and prisoners. Prisoners are encouraged to take responsibility for themselves and their future. Their rights to statutory protections and complaints processes are respected.**

**Throughout the prison, staff and prisoners have a mutual understanding and respect for each other and their responsibilities. They engage with each other positively and constructively. Prisoners are kept well informed about matters which affect them and are treated humanely and with understanding. If they have problems or feel threatened they are offered effective support. Prisoners are encouraged to participate in decision making about their own lives. The prison co-operates positively with agencies which exercise statutory powers of complaints, investigation or supervision.**

### **Inspection findings**

During the inspection it was abundantly clear that the interactions and relationships between staff and the young men were predominantly professional, positive, and respectful. It was evident that staff had the best interests of the young men at the core of what they did and how they went about their duties and activities. The Governor-in-Charge's vision for the institution was well-understood and, with only a very few exceptions, fully bought into by the staff group and wholly bought into by the diverse range of partner agencies that engage with the young men in HMYOI Polmont. It was uplifting to note that the majority of the young men inspectors engaged with, openly acknowledged that staff were there to, capable of, and interested in helping them.

There was an excellent example where staff's innate compassion, care, thoughtfulness and respect for a young man's predicament, facilitated his attendance at a close relative's funeral the day immediately following his arrival in prison. Within a couple of hours of his arrival, arrangements were made to ensure that he could attend the funeral and this was communicated to him before the staff went off shift. What was particularly evident was that the staff's actions were borne out of compassion, rather than a simple adherence to protocols or procedures.

Whilst the interactions witnessed were professional and respectful this must be counterpointed with the limited time that the young men were permitted to be out of their cells. It was surprising that during conversations with SPS staff, at all levels, the majority held view was that social interaction opportunities were limited because of the fear of interpersonal violence, therefore extended periods of confinement to their cells was required in order to maintain good order and discipline.

The compelling and progressive vision established by the Governor-in-Charge and supported by the vast majority of staff referred to respect, self-determination, personal responsibility, personal learning and self-development. The strapline used to articulate the vision of what the institution was looking to achieve was "Creating a learning environment by making every contact an opportunity to learn, with the aim of creating young men who are successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors". However, these two core rationales

seemed to sit slightly uneasily against the contention that the young men needed to be locked up for prolonged periods because of their unpredictable and potentially damaging behaviours.

The PFP process, where each individual's personal plan was established, was articulated for the young men as "Planning how to use my time in custody to prepare me for a positive future in my community". A future where respect, trust and self-determination are at the core of what the young men need to learn and display in order to become valued and contributing citizens. It was difficult to see how the individual could best use their time in custody if they were not able to practice what they have learnt contemporaneously to that learning. In order to practice and demonstrate these skills before being liberated, surely they needed to be allowed to utilise them whilst within the safer environment of the prison. At present there were very limited opportunities for them to do so.

One area requiring attention related to the use of large whiteboards, in prominent and public locations within residential areas, that clearly identified the name, prison number and location of those held in the hall. This approach ceased in most prisons some time ago, for data security reasons, we were surprised to find them in use in all residential areas in HMYOI Polmont and suggest that an alternative approach is adopted.

There was an encouragingly wide range of methods deployed to inform the young men of activities and events taking place within HMYOI Polmont. Of particular note was the good use made of the media facilities to transmit messages over the TV channel and via the radio station, both of which are "piped" into every cell. The development of these messages provided interesting, imaginative and varied opportunities for learning, as well as providing the opportunity for individuals' work to be shared with and recognised by the entire population of HMYOI Polmont. Great pride was taken, and rightly so, by those individuals whose work was chosen.

Across a wide range of activities and initiatives it was evident that a human rights, human dignity approach was taken in policy and process development and demonstrated in its application. This ranged from cultural events on offer such as the excellent, well-received Holocaust remembrance event, to the provision of a variety of key information for the young men in a range of foreign languages. Where there may be an issue regarding an individual's rights, humanity and dignity not being met was in relation to access to time in the fresh air. The young men told us that they would enjoy time outside, especially when the weather was good, yet on one sunny and warm afternoon, during our inspection, no young men accessed the open air, during the time allocated to that activity in the daily regime plan. Staff and management told us that every offender was offered the opportunity to take time in the open air, however, few if any took up the opportunity. Whilst accepting management's position that the young men were regularly offered the opportunity, we were surprised that more was not done to encourage the young men to participate in outside exercise periods, as these offer opportunities for social interaction, physical activity and exposure to fresh air and sunlight, all of which are good for physical and mental wellbeing. Additionally, encouragement and explanation based on the benefits to be gained by spending time outside, would sit well within the framework of expanding the learning environment into the residential

areas, which was one of the Governor-in-Charge's three key objectives for the next 12 months.

Finally, it was worthy of note that staff, the young men, their visitors, the service providers and partner agencies all openly and without prompting commented positively on how the institution had changed, especially over the last two to three years and that it was clear that the young men's potential and futures were at the centre of what happens in HMYOI Polmont. We welcome and recognise the positive developments in HMYOI Polmont. We would encourage the Governor-in-Charge, management, and staff within HMYOI Polmont to redouble their efforts to ensure that the lived experience of the young men changes too. We encourage this in order that the young men use their improved skills, knowledge and understanding of themselves, whilst in custody, by means of more social interaction with their peers, their personal officers and other positive role models, rather than spending extensive periods locked in their cells. This is necessary in order to maximise the opportunities for personal change, as well as supporting the notion that positive and constructive interpersonal relationships should be encouraged and established, something that is difficult to achieve through a locked cell door.

## **EDUCATION AND LEARNING**

**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. Prisoners' sentences are managed appropriately to prepare them for returning to their community. The prison 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 education, training, recreational, sporting, religious and cultural activities.**

### **Inspection findings**

Since 2012, HMYOI Polmont had carried out significant work in redefining the institution as a learning environment. This was a key aspect of its strategic planning and underpinned almost every activity within HMYOI Polmont. The Governor-in-Charge and senior managers recognised that, although much important and impressive foundation work had been carried out, ensuring that all young men were able to take advantage of education and training was still very much a work in progress.

The SPS publication “Vision for Young People in Custody” developed in 2014 had had a strong influence on the reflection, thinking and planning of educational provision. The adaptation of the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence<sup>3</sup> specifically for young people in custody within this publication had had a strong impact on how education and training courses had been developed and were being delivered. Research into desistance in young people had also been a key influence, as had Developing the Young Workforce and analysis of future key employment sectors. The institution had valued the support provided by Education Scotland staff who had carried out a detailed mapping exercise of provision against Curriculum for Excellence and the indicators within GIRFEC. This had resulted in the range of courses and training programmes being extended and their structure, content and delivery approaches being enhanced. The Learning Environment Steering Group, comprising key partners including Skills Development Scotland, provided effective strategic oversight of education and training provision. There were plans in place to adjust the membership of this group to ensure that it had a more national focus in order to reflect the geographically diverse backgrounds of the population held within HMYOI Polmont.

Staff from Fife College who delivered most education programmes, Barnardo’s who delivered youth work programmes, and prison staff had contributed well to discussions about revising education and training provision. There was now a good balance between academic, vocational and personal development courses, set out

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<sup>3</sup> Curriculum for Excellence is designed to achieve a transformation in education in Scotland by providing a coherent, more flexible and enriched curriculum from 3 to 18.

in a clear and attractive Prospectus. In principle, there were learning opportunities available for almost all young men in HMYOI Polmont. There were also opportunities for productive work parties which could lead to certification. These included cleaning, laundry and catering, and there were plans in place to introduce horticulture. A large number of external partners also provided additional learning opportunities and support services.

Many education courses involved key core skills such as literacy and numeracy, but there were also well-conceived courses in the visual and performing arts. Following the analysis of provision against Curriculum for Excellence, there had been an increased emphasis on personal development, health and wellbeing and citizenship embedded within courses. Also, more project-based learning had been successfully introduced, within which core skills were contextualised. This approach was enjoyed by the young men. There were examples of very successful projects which had extended young men's understanding of political and social issues and involved them in creative responses to them. These included Holocaust Day, International Women's Day and the Scottish Independence Referendum. Many of these had made very effective use of partnerships with external organisations. Young people were also encouraged to write and illustrate storybooks and compose personalised nursery rhymes for their children. This had improved literacy.

Vocational courses were relevant to the workplace and focused mainly on the construction industries, such as joinery, brickwork, plumbing and painting and decorating. There were also introductory courses in engineering and forklift truck driving. Imaginative courses in bicycle renewal and in dog rescue and training were also on offer with both including a strong element of personal development training. However, lack of staffing continuity or staff absence could sometimes hinder delivery of courses. At the time of the inspection several vocational courses were unavailable to young men, or were covered by relief staff. There were examples of highly successful embedding of core skills in vocational courses, which met well the needs of young men who did not enjoy long periods of theoretical work. Youth work programmes focused strongly on the development of personal attributes, but also included arts activities. Many of these sessions were delivered in the halls and were enjoyed by those who attend them.

As is mentioned in a number of other areas of this report, participation levels in the interesting and diverse range of available activities were disappointingly low.

Management and staff were clear that the women moving to HMYOI Polmont in late summer 2016, should have the same levels of access to education and training as the young men, including in construction and engineering areas. Staff also hoped to introduce hairdressing and beauty and additional arts and crafts courses for the women.

HMYOI Polmont placed a strong value on accreditation and celebration of achievement. Most courses led to recognised qualifications at appropriate levels, should the young men wish to undertake them. For example, most vocational courses included National Progression Awards, Introduction to Workplace Skills and some included elements of the Skills Development Scotland Certificate of Work Readiness. Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) Health and Safety

certification was available. Young men were encouraged to display their work and enter competitions such as the Koestler Awards. The institution made sure that, as far as possible, young men undertaking vocational courses were able to study at appropriate levels, in some cases picking up apprenticeship study at levels undertaken before conviction. There were clear opportunities for young men to progress in most courses and, if wished, they could study a range of distance learning courses up to Degree level. The Driving Theory Test was popular and ASDAN<sup>4</sup> awards were used for arts programmes. Success rates were high amongst those who were presented for qualifications.

Individual courses were designed and delivered well, by highly enthusiastic and committed staff. The young men who attended them engaged well with learning. Relationships between learners and teaching staff or officer instructors were very positive, with staff offering high levels of support and encouragement to the young men. The learning environment had recently been refurbished and accommodation and facilities were now very good. Learning materials and activities were appropriate and geared towards meeting the individual needs and abilities of the young men. Relationships between learners were also mostly positive in classes or workshops. Staff encouraged young men to work together, which helped foster positive relationships between them and helped them to develop team working skills appropriate to future employment. An attractive, well-stocked and well-managed library was available, with capacity to draw down more reading material from the Falkirk Library Service. However, more could be done to encourage “hard to reach” young men to use the library services, for example through a catalogue and booking system available in the halls.

Uptake of educational activities was not as high as it could be, with most classes having significant spare capacity.

Issues with young men electing not to participate, double booking of activities, young men refusing to attend classes even after they had booked a place on them and concerns about the presence of enemies in the education area could mean that attendance was low and erratic.

While there was a clear booking system in place within HMYOI Polmont, it did not always appear to be adhered to, and therefore did not always result in young men turning up to pre-booked activities. There were also a large number of activities offered by external partners, with scope for confusion about who should be taking part in what.

There also appeared to be issues with communication between education and training staff and hall staff, so that if young men were booked for alternative activities, that information was not made available in time for any course backfilling to take place. This could be frustrating for courses which had a waiting list, such as art. It was also not clear how consistently young men were supported or encouraged to commence or sustain attendance at education by personal or hall officers.

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<sup>4</sup> Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) is a British charity organisation which provides educational opportunities for young people, helping learners to develop their personal and social attributes through its award programmes and qualifications.

There were various systems for identifying the learning needs of young men on admission to HMYOI Polmont, for example during induction or PFP discussions with personal officers, or within the Employability and Enterprise Unit. However, this did not always translate to an appropriate and sustainable personal learning plan.

The fact that different discussions could take place with different people (during induction, with personal officers, or in the Employability and Enterprise Unit) could lead to confusion about what a young man should be doing to meet their learning needs. While leaflets outlining learning activities were available in the halls, young people spoken to described simply ticking what learning activities they wanted to do during induction. (A few claimed to have forgotten what they had selected). It was also unclear whether discussions about how a young man could progress their learning were sufficiently joined up amongst all relevant staff. This was particularly the case when a young man had been involved in youth work or in one-off projects delivered by external partners.

HMYOI Polmont had recognised that the issue of engagement with and co-ordination of learning activities required attention. A one-day conference took place with all relevant parties in mid-April, and it was hoped that the discussions would lead to the identification and implementation of solutions. Additionally, long-term staff absence in the Employability and Enterprise Unit and in the inclusion team had recently been addressed, which should help to ensure that young men were offered the right courses for their needs.

Untried young men were able to undertake a limited suite of education activities, but not all took advantage of this. Education and youth work staff made significant and positive efforts to support young men in halls, particularly if they were anxious about travelling to the Learning Centres, were on report, or were struggling with mental health issues. This included those who have been segregated. This was an impressive approach, which built positive relationships with sometimes very vulnerable or challenging young men.

The system for access to the gym appeared to work well, though young men complained that there was little available at weekends. A breakfast gym club was available, and a boot camp programme entitled "Drive" was popular. Issues with gaining regular access to outdoor exercise was a common theme amongst the young men.

In terms of self-help and peer support, the Peer Mentoring Scheme was now well-established, the element of responsibility involved had had a major and positive impact on their self-esteem. An evaluation report of the Peer Learning Hub, commissioned by SPS, spoke very positively about the impact on the mentors, but had not yet evaluated the overall impact of the project on the wider body of young men.

## **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. Prisoners' sentences are managed appropriately to prepare them for returning to their community. The prison 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.**

### **Inspection findings**

The brief provided by the Governor-in-Charge, before the inspection commenced, provided details regarding the wide range of purposeful activities which were available to the young men in HMYOI Polmont. She highlighted what she saw as the biggest challenge for her staff and management team, the fact the young men were difficult to engage with, especially in the morning, as they liked their bed and were difficult to motivate first thing.

There could be no doubting the range of activities available. These ranged from work opportunities, vocational training schemes, education, preparation for release, physical education and youth work initiatives to name but a few. In short, there was no shortage of activities on offer to the young men in HMYOI Polmont. Some activities took place within the residential setting in an attempt to not only increase provision provided but also improve levels of engagement.

The inspectors were particularly impressed with the co-ordinated work being undertaken in the joinery workshop in collaboration with and supported by the education department. This work was focused on getting the young men as work ready as possible. Of particular interest was the ability of the young men to attain their CSCS card at the end of the programme. The training element consisted of a 14 week course focusing on developing the young men's technical and skill base through both practical and educational activities culminating in a final event where a testing station vehicle was brought into the institution so that the young men could sit their CSCS qualification. Staff in these areas were a credit to HMYOI Polmont and practiced the learning environment ethos the Governor-in-Charge and her team talked of throughout the inspection.

There was an on-going issue however, in relation to the levels of engagement with the available activities, especially those based outwith the residential setting. On the last day of inspection, figures provided by HMYOI Polmont, showed that from a population of 477 only 149, or 31%, were engaged at 11:00 and from 470 at 14:00 150, or 31%, were engaged in purposeful activities. Given that there were circa 100 young men on remand, these figures indicated that under 40% of the convicted population were engaged in an activity.

The visits experience can be difficult for families, especially when visiting for the first time. This was an important aspect of prison life and inspectors spent some time with visitors before and during visits session. Inspectors were particularly impressed by the quality and nature of the interactions between the front of house staff and the visitors, especially where young children were involved. They were a credit to HMYOI Polmont. The atmosphere in the visit room itself was relaxed and friendly with staff providing support to those that needed it whilst at the same time providing an appropriate level of security but without being intrusive. Whilst the furniture in the visit room was modern and bright the actual seating arrangements did appear to be somewhat regimented and not as relaxed as they could have been. There did however appear to be high levels of engagement between the young men and their visitors and when staff did interact with either party it was done in a courteous and professional manner.

Where closed visits were utilised this was managed and overseen through a well-managed process with robust measures in place to ensure it was appropriately applied.

Virtual visits were observed and this appeared to work very well with the staff present talking favourably about its worth to the young men who struggled for visits due to distances involved. This was a positive and sensible initiative in line with advances in technology.

HMYOI Polmont operated an individualised case management approach tailored to suit the needs of the young men. This was evidenced throughout the inspection. Both a standard and enhanced Integrated Case Management (ICM) case conference were observed by two separate members of the inspection team and found to be of a high standard. The needs of the young men were at the forefront of the discussions which included family representation. The enhanced case conference was chaired in an exemplary fashion with the cross section of multi-disciplinary staff giving an excellent overview in respect of the individual concerned. This was an excellent example of an individualised approach.

PFPs was the model being utilised at HMYOI Polmont to encourage an appreciative enquiry approach from the staff when sitting down with their individual young men in respect of the personal officer role. At the time of inspection not all staff had been trained in this initiative and as a result its utilisation was by no means common practice across the institution. What was not entirely clear, when speaking with staff, was how PFPs fitted in to the overall ethos of HMYOI Polmont. Senior management however were able to articulate the vision involving PFPs and the strategy for young men going forward. Staff in general spoke of this with varying degrees of knowledge and buy-in. In terms of the young men a small number were able to speak about their experience in relation to their PFP however the majority spoken with had either no knowledge or had self-rejected from the process. We will look to establish what progress has been made with this initiative when we return in early 2017.

Staff attitudes and behaviours witnessed throughout the course of the inspection were, in the main, positive and professional. Interactions witnessed between staff and the young men were also what you would expect, though varying degrees of engagement were encountered. For example there appeared to be little emphasis

placed on active engagement between the staff and the young men during periods of recreation.

The most significant issue in relation to purposeful activity, pro-social modelling and levels of engagement relate to the apparent lack of time the majority of young men spent out of their cells. These young men needed to be encouraged to engage in activities that were social and beneficial to their health and wellbeing, rather than spending long periods locked in their cells, which for most will be a solitary and unproductive experience.

Throughout the course of inspection the issue of time in the fresh air for the young men was a cause for concern. There appeared to be little or no oversight of the entitlement of the young men to this most basic of provision within the Prison Rules.

Time in the open air is something that should be routinely encouraged and this situation must be addressed by management.

## TRANSITIONS

**Prisoners are prepared for their successful return to the community. The prison is active in supporting prisoners for returning successfully to their community at the conclusion of their sentence. The prison works with agencies in the community to ensure that resettlement plans are prepared, including specific plans for employment, training, education, healthcare, housing and financial management.**

### Inspection findings

Suitable pre-release planning was in place for all young men whether or not they were subject to statutory supervision. The ICM system was well-established. The promising PFPs for young men, not subject to statutory supervision, was still at a very early stage with a relatively low participation rate. There was a commendable commitment to preparing young men well for community reintegration from the beginning of their sentence. A wide range of appropriate opportunities were provided to realise this aim.

However, participation rates suggested not enough young men were encouraged or enabled to benefit fully from what was on offer.

Throughcare Support Officers (TSOs), working closely with contracted providers, supported young men's resettlement. They were able to respond flexibly to need in order to maximise young men's community reintegration. Securing settled accommodation for young men leaving HMYOI Polmont was a significant concern. It was a concern that young men's motivation, to secure employment, was impacted upon as they were likely to be worse off than if they claimed benefits.

ICM case conferences were appropriately convened to allow suitable pre-release plans to be put in place. Case conferences were well-attended by relevant community-based staff. Video conferencing was used to facilitate attendance where distance was a barrier to attendance. Whole Systems Approach meetings were taking place for relevant young men. Staff recognised the importance of having the right people from the community in attendance.

For those young men not subject to statutory supervision the PFP had recently been introduced. The PFP was created with partners and developed from the workbook which had previously been used. The PFP was introduced to ensure that all young men in custody in HMYOI Polmont, regardless of the length of their sentence, received co-ordinated help and support to achieve reintegration when they returned to the community. The identified personal officer was responsible for working with the young man to prepare their plan over their first six weeks in custody. The PFP included a useful outcomes map which was intended to be regularly revised following routine reviews. However, no second or subsequent reviews were available. PFPs were presented to the case management board who confirmed the services to be provided. These promising developments were still at a very early stage. There was some evidence that personal officers were identifying particular needs and seeking relevant services more often as a result of working on the PFP. For example youth work was receiving more referrals for one-to-one work with young

men. However, figures for those young men engaging in and completing plans suggested participation rates needed to increase. Greater attention could usefully be paid to ensuring personal officers, who had such a key role in the plan, had enough encouragement and support to successfully embed the PFP process. Personal officers must play a pivotal role in creating the learning environment. The potential for learning and skills development in everyday tasks was not yet fully understood by all staff. The vision of the learning environment could perhaps best be realised through support and coaching for staff to reflect on their day-to-day practice and recognise the daily opportunities they had to make a difference to the lives of the young men they were responsible for.

A range of external agencies were engaged to support young men's reintegration in the community. The introduction of a Third Sector co-ordinator had enabled careful consideration of the identified need and a closer look at which organisations could best meet this need. Sustainability of support was a significant concern, due to the short-term nature of the funding available to a number of external organisations.

Building young men's skills to enable them to resettle in the community started immediately on their arrival in HMYOI Polmont. There was a wide range of opportunities for learning at all levels. Many young men engaged in useful learning, developed new skills and benefited from valuable work experience. An increased youth work service had enabled the provision of "drop-in" sessions in every hall. All young men were encouraged to take part in these informal sessions designed to encourage the participation of those least likely to take part. This was a promising approach to widening young men's participation in activities.

However, overall participation rates across all activities remained disappointingly low.

There was a significant challenge with timetabling which led to young men not attending sessions at short notice which meant that resources were not being fully utilised. This lack of continuity was likely to lessen the potential effectiveness of the work being done. There was no doubt that the wide range of opportunities for young men in HMYOI Polmont to learn new skills had great potential to increase the likelihood of successful integration into the community. The challenge now is how best to ensure that all young men have equal access to activities available and attendance is maximised.

TSOs provided valuable one-to-one help to many young men enabling them to successfully reintegrate into their communities. Three TSOs had been in place for a year to work with young men who were not subject to supervision when they returned to the community. SPS regional managers for throughcare ensured consistent standards across the country. The TSOs started working with young people around two weeks prior to liberation. They made important links between the young man, his personal officer and the external throughcare provider. TSOs enhanced young men's chances of successful reintegration by accompanying them to key appointments on the day of release. They continued to work with young men for several weeks after their return to the community. They worked hard to identify and strengthen the young man's support network, making important connections in local communities and always sought opportunities to promote inclusion. They were

responsive to any crises and emerging needs in the early weeks and gradually withdrew support as the young man settled back into life in the community. Young men required different levels of support and the TSOs had the flexibility to provide bespoke help. This included continuing to provide help outwith the six week period when this was needed. The TSOs had built up useful knowledge of the availability and effectiveness of services in the different communities. Many young men benefited greatly from the throughcare service. However, as HMYOI Polmont was a national facility this individual service was only available to young men returning to the Central Belt. All young people were linked to one of the three contracted throughcare providers but those returning to more distant communities did not benefit from the personal service of a TSO once they had returned home.

Young men nearing release were helped in a number of ways to find work or enrol for training or education. Some had college places arranged and it was possible for young men living in the Community Integration Unit (CIU) to attend college while still in custody. A variety of work parties were available allowing the young men to develop core skills relevant to later employment. Individuals' achievements were well-recorded, enabling them to have gathered evidence of their skills and abilities to provide to potential employers. The three contracted throughcare providers worked with young men to secure employment or training opportunities in the community. Many had secured short-term positions through Community Jobs Scotland and a number of them had been sustained longer-term or had moved on to other jobs.

However, as noted previously many young men leaving custody were less likely to seek employment as they would be worse off than they were on benefit. This was true for those young men who moved into accommodation and received housing benefit. Unfortunately this greatly reduced their motivation to seek and sustain employment regardless of the quality of the support available to them.

Securing settled accommodation was key to young men's successful resettlement in the community. About 30% of young men did not have an address to return to and this remained a considerable challenge. In many parts of Scotland the young men, upon liberation, were required to present as homeless on the day of liberation. This got in the way of good planning and preparation for release. The TSOs had built up some good relationships with housing providers which had led to some successes.

There was considerable local variation in how well agencies responded to young men's accommodation needs. Greater attention could usefully be paid at a national level to negotiating better arrangements with housing providers to ensure young men had appropriate accommodation identified prior to their release date.

Appointments with Job Centre Plus were arranged through the Links Centre to ensure young men had a fresh claim processed before they left custody. Worryingly, delays in receiving their benefit meant that young men were dependent on their liberation grant to fund their first few weeks back in the community. In particular those young men who were medically unfit to work had to attend their community GP for a sick line before they could claim the appropriate benefit. This presented an extra barrier for those young men who were not registered with a GP. Having to present as homeless and get registered with a GP on the day of release hindered good planning.

## **PROFESSOR McARA'S BRIEF AND OBSERVATIONS**

**To take a holistic view of the nature and operation of the “regime” in HMYOI Polmont, informed by research evidence from the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime on factors which promote desistance from offending amongst young people.**

**For young people in custody these factors are inter alia: positive and trusting relationships between young people and staff; services and support to address underlying vulnerability, educational exclusion and other needs; support for reintegration into the community with a particular emphasis on building and sustaining positive peer and family relationships, and opening up access to educational opportunities and/or employment.**

The evidence base on which the report draws can be found in Annex A.

### **Inspection findings**

The vision for HMYOI Polmont, as set out by the Governor-in-Charge on Day 1 and included in the accompanying prison documentation, was highly commendable. Predicated on an educational model of care (the “learning environment”), its ambition accorded well with desistance research. If fully implemented the regime would provide an excellent standard of care for the young men, and requisite opportunities and support for successful community reintegration. The Governor-in-Charge acknowledged that HMYOI Polmont was in transition and that some of the key staff, particularly those in residential halls, had been resistant to aspects of the changes which she was trying to put in place.

From observation, a number of conversations with staff and the young men and from a review of key documentation and focus groups, there was a degree of dissonance between the ambition as specified above and implementation. This is particularly concerning given that further change will be occurring when the women were transferred to HMYOI Polmont from HMP & YOI Cornton Vale.

A number of key issues which were impeding the implementation of the holistic learning environment are set out in detail below.

### **Conditions and access to services within the YOI**

#### Residential conditions for older children

The architecture and layout of the residential hall for 16 and 17 year olds (Blair) was extremely bleak. The young men living in the hall were older children (according to international rights conventions to which the UK, and hence Scotland, is a signatory).

The conditions in Blair were very similar to other parts of the establishment, and did not make much concession to the fact that its client group were children, nor was there evidence that the social space within the hall was being utilised in such a way as to support an environment for learning.

## Use of the learning opportunities

The number of activities and development opportunities on offer was impressive. Examples of good practice included the Peer Mentoring Scheme, and the Community Safety, Teambuilding and Leadership Course (delivered by the Community Link Police Officer). The latter had been positively evaluated and had the benefit of linking the young men into further sources of support.

Although there were a great many activities on offer, on the day in which I visited the activities centre, there were very few young men using the facilities. The desk staff in Activities 1 showed me the list of those expected to attend and those who had actually turned up (a very low proportion). Residential hall staff said that unless the young men specifically asked to take part in activity, then nothing much was done to encourage participation, a point confirmed by the young men themselves in the focus group. A particular issue identified in conversation with hall staff, was that many of the young men appeared to sleep during the morning because they had been watching television all night. I was informed that it was impossible to turn off the television without disabling the whole hall: a design flaw not conducive to maximum usage of learning environment. Staff also felt that the “population” had changed significantly over the past few years, and, although they were smaller in number, the young men themselves were far more challenging to deal with, and not at all motivated to change.

A further inhibitor to maximum usage of learning opportunities, was “enemy” management. All staff made efforts to keep recorded enemies apart from each other. Enemy management meant that the young men were often not permitted to take part in work parties or other activities at short notice. Staff admitted that this was not always explained to the young men. A concern was that the enemy lists were not always up-to-date - with some so-called enemies now part of friendship networks and some potential enemies not formally identified. One of the unit managers highlighted the complexities that enemy management caused for moving the young men across the institution, likening it to air traffic control at Heathrow. The default position was to manage relationship tensions between young men via security.

One of the staff in the activities centre reported that a key member of staff who worked on mediation and “deep conflict” cases had left around five months previously and not been replaced. Whilst there were other trained mediators across the prison, this particular gap was felt to be problematic.

One member of staff noted that aligning some of the educational services within the work parties made for greater uptake of the education, and in Iona one staff member noted a change in the last six months, with more remand young men now going to activities.

The sustainability of some of the services on offer was somewhat fragile, dependent on funding streams not always under the control of HMYOI Polmont. For example, many of the staff from the local community who participated in the Community Safety, Teambuilding and Leadership Course were on fixed-term

contracts (including an employee of Women's Aid whose job was currently at risk). The librarian was employed by Falkirk Council and able to access additional funding for books and services via that route – but this again may be at risk because of local authority budget cuts.

### **Positive Future Plans (PFPs)**

In the context of a learning environment, the PFPs ought to play a key role in the planning of services across the YOI and should form the fulcrum of the institution's commitment to rehabilitation and promoting reintegration. A number of impediments were found to their optimal usage:

The form was extremely long and required to be filled in over a number of weeks. Due to reported pressures of day-to-day hall duties (see below), hall staff felt they did not have enough time to complete these plans and noted that the young men often "got bored" with the process. In the focus group, hall staff said that only one page of the 64 page plan ever featured in broader planning, and that the remaining information sat on file and was hardly used. They also noted that the assessments contained in the PFP were duplicated in the assessments undertaken by TSOs (confirmed by the latter in the focus group) as well as on reception into HMYOI Polmont. Consequently the young men were undergoing multiple assessments to gather the same information (not an effective use of staff time and expertise and potentially re-traumatising for the older children and the young men).

Training to support the implementation of PFP was reported by the hall staff to be sporadic. The sequence of implementation should have been: training, pilot, evaluation, and then roll-out to the whole institution, should the evaluation prove positive. The hall staff said that some of them had begun using PFPs before they had formal training and found this to be stressful – "I didn't know what I was doing" said one. A further focus group member said they were concerned that the process of assessment was eliciting information about deep trauma from the young men and they (the officers) were not sure about how the information was to be recorded on the form or shared. They also noted that full roll-out occurred before the end of the pilot. When asked about this, the unit manager in charge of the pilot said that the implementation had been planned precisely in this way: staff needed to get a feel for the forms and have a go at filling them in, before they had formal training, he felt this would maximise the value of the training. It was clear from the responses of the residential hall staff, that this mode of implementation had not been clearly communicated to them.

### **The role of the personal officer**

As with PFPs, personal officers also have an important role to play in young men's rehabilitation, by:

- supporting young men to make best use of the facilities on offer to support educational achievement;
- accessing services aimed at tackling vulnerabilities and special needs;

- to sustain family and peer relationships on the outside; and
- planning how they will spend their time in custody to the best effect.

As stated above, the Governor-in-Charge in her presentation noted how there had been resistance from some residential hall staff to the learning environment approach. The evidence from the focus groups with staff and from conversations with individual staff members in the residential halls, suggested that staff were not able to act with maximum effect in their capacity as personal officers.

Staff morale amongst the residential hall staff/personal officers interviewed was stated as being very low. Members of the group considered that halls were understaffed and that they did not have time to complete all the duties assigned to them. Practical issues such as time needed to manage showers, etc, meant that they had limited opportunity to fulfil the personal officer role. Their sense was that management did not appreciate the pressures of their roles and that too much change was happening with insufficient resources and in too short a timescale. Moreover they reported that they did not feel respected nor trusted by management. There was not enough face-to-face contact with senior management, and the habit of emailing staff with key developments was not conducive to strong and purposeful staff relationships: fundamentally they felt that the chain of command was dysfunctional. While the group did agree that they were clear about what the Governor-in-Charge was trying to achieve, they felt her ambitions were unrealistic given current conditions.

A common concern was that the regime was embracing the care ethic at the cost of security and good order.

While most of the prison officers in the focus group had been on training programmes, their perception was that such programmes did not give them the necessary practical skills to do their jobs more effectively. A number of the group had been trained in restorative justice, a mediating role in which they took pride, but this was reported to have been taken away from them.

By contrast the unit managers interviewed as part a focus group, all reported how much they enjoyed their jobs. They acknowledged the need for further cultural change across the institution, and whilst this was slow to achieve, some headway was being made. However, echoing the residential hall staff, the managers agreed that the prison was probably a little understaffed in terms of what it was aiming to achieve and that prison officers were extremely busy. The pressures they were under meant that the personal officer dimension of the role often suffered and was not working at optimal levels. Whilst they (unit managers) had all embraced the changes which the Governor-in-Charge was making, some did feel that change had been very rapid. They also noted that some of the older prison officers had been resistant to change. However, in their day-to-day roles, many such staff were in fact undertaking the role of personal officer extremely well, they just did not perceive it as such. Indeed one unit manager fairly new to the institution commented that staff were “less cynical here”, and that they were committed to supporting change. Staff

training in support of the learning environment was now reported to be about two-thirds complete.

## **Views from the young men**

From the focus group and conversations with young men, mixed views were expressed about personal officers and the quality of the relationships between the young men and staff. Some young men did not know what a personal officer was. A common perception in the focus group was that the staff were not always respectful towards the young men. Residential hall staff were viewed as “turnkeys”. One of the young men had been in secure care and reported that staff there were much more accessible - with staff playing table tennis or pool with the boys or sitting with them watching television. These more informal links were important to building strong relationships. However other young men in Blair reported that staff were respectful towards them and relationships were generally good. One staff member felt that there was a culture of bullying amongst the young men but that it was not getting picked up – the bullying was mostly through ostracising those who were “different”.

The young men themselves (and in particular those I spoke to in Blair) took a more positive view of the culture of HMYOI Polmont, saying that they were not aware of any bullying. However, these young men were unlikely to be representative of the population in HMYOI Polmont as a whole.

## **Family contacts and visits**

### Visits

The findings from the observation and one-to-one meeting with the Family Contact Officer (FCO) highlighted many aspects of good practice. The visit room was welcoming and staff appeared to have good relationships with young men. I witnessed small examples of kindness between staff and the young men, and between staff and visitors. All but one of the visitors I spoke to reported that staff were respectful towards them.

Two of the women I spoke to were accompanied by children and they were happy with the facilities for children in the visits room. The waiting room for visitors was clean and had a few toys/children’s books. I observed staff at the reception desk being welcoming and helpful to the visitors. One woman reported to me that she had felt intimidated the first time she had visited, but the staff had put her at her ease on subsequent occasions. Those who had had contact with the FCO felt that this had been helpful.

HMYOI Polmont is to be commended for providing “virtual visits” by utilising video conferencing facilities to enable visit sessions for the young men and their families who are not able to visit because of distance. This was an important mechanism to facilitate and sustain family bonds in the context of a national facility. However, the service was dependent upon the availability of facilities in the areas where the family live. APEX Grampian provided facilities, as did the social work department in Orkney, but this was variable.

These positives aside, the findings from the inspection also indicated that the balance in the regime between security and care, overwhelmingly lies with security in respect of family visits. A particular example arose during a conversation with the FCO who said that “themed family visits” had been stopped because there had been intelligence that these visits were being used to bring drugs into HMYOI Polmont. The benefits of these important visits were lost, when other mechanisms to allow these valuable visits to continue were not explored. The FCO was also concerned about staffing levels in the visits room during bonding visits, because of the risk of disorder breaking out. However staff in the visits room commented that incidents were very rare, and that there was generally a good atmosphere.

#### Involving families in decision-making

While most of the visitors I spoke to were happy with the arrangements in HMYOI Polmont, one reported that she had never been consulted about decisions relating to her grandson (for whom she was next of kin). She was particularly concerned that important medical treatment had been delayed (an operation had been planned for the week after the custodial sentence was received and it had consequently been cancelled, as had an assessment relating to the young person’s learning difficulties). As HMYOI Polmont came under a different health board from her home one, she had been advised by her own GP that the referral process for the operation would have to start again. This situation was taken up with management and reassurance was provided that the young man’s case was being pursued.

The FCO reported that he was not involved in supporting family integration into the PFP planning or case management process. He had come to know some families well and felt he could have a positive role in this process. However as currently implemented (and as noted above) the role appeared to be conceived as one primarily of security rather than care.

#### **Throughcare and preparation for release**

The TSOs interviewed presented as highly committed and extremely hardworking, often going above and beyond their normal duties and working long hours to support the young men in the community. (In the case of particularly vulnerable young men, they sometimes went over the specified period of support). The TSOs reported that they had been empowered to develop the throughcare service “as they saw fit”; that they had enjoyed this responsibility and that morale was high. However, they highlighted a number of structural impediments, outwith the influence of the TSOs and SPS, to the development of a fully effective throughcare service:

### Financial support for ex-offenders

Young men leaving the institution were given a £55 liberation grant, but if entitled to benefits would not subsequently receive money for another five weeks, leaving a major gap. In the view of the TSOs, the liberation grant needed to be much bigger or the time period between the grant and the payment of benefits much shorter.

Furthermore, under the new Universal Credit Scheme, when benefits did come through it would now be in a large lump sum, which was challenging for the young people in terms of budgeting.

### Housing

Because of the current structure of benefits there was a financial disincentive for the young men to work if they were homeless. The TSOs felt reluctant to encourage those who were in need of housing into employment, as it was not immediately in the young men's financial interests to do so. It was especially difficult to find appropriate accommodation in the Glasgow area.

### Employability

Employability was an issue for many leaving HMYOI Polmont, but the TSOs welcomed the service in which employers, willing to give employment to vulnerable groups (including those leaving custody) for periods of between six and 12 months, registered on a database to which the TSOs had access. The young men could be matched to employment opportunities and a CV and covering letter was all that was needed, rather than hours of application form filling.

### Disconnected health care

A major issue identified by the TSOs was the lack of connect between health services provided in HMYOI Polmont and those in the community – there was often a long gap in receiving specialist services in the community (as opposed to getting the young men registered with a GP which was reported to be relatively straightforward). On occasions the TSOs had to make hard decisions as whether to recommend that a service began in the prison (eg referral to mental health services), given that there would then be a long period of time before the service was accessed in the community. In their view it was sometimes better to delay access to support to ensure more continuity of care. A particular issue occurred when the young person was going back to a different health board. Given that HMYOI Polmont was a National facility this affected the majority of the population.

More generally issues of confidentiality and data sharing meant that TSO access to information about mental and physical health was limited. This posed challenges when trying to evolve a package of care and support in the community. An example given was a young man with Asperger's Syndrome, who needed specialist housing and support. One of the TSOs said that they had

only found out about the young man's special needs "by accident" and yet awareness of these problems was crucial in terms of planning effective services.

### Co-ordinating and sustaining services

A further challenge faced by the TSOs was co-ordinating a range of different services for the young men in the areas to which they were returning. The TSOs had worked very hard to build up relationships with individuals from specific services but this took time. Fife now operated a system where there was one link person (employed by the local authority) who co-ordinated across services (Stirling was now following suit). This was found to be far more effective.

The TSOs commented (as with others, see above) that because of changes elsewhere in the system, they were dealing with a smaller number of young people, but with increasingly complex needs (especially mental health issues). This was challenging in terms of resettlement and in putting together an effective package of support. The sustainability of services was also in question given budget cuts.

### Sentencing practice

Finally, TSOs signalled a frustration with current sentencing practice in cases where a period of custody was followed by a Community Payback Order (this was common). In their view the consecutive (rather than concurrent) nature of these sentences meant that the young people were being "set up to fail", as many could not cope with the additional requirements of the Community Payback Order in the immediate weeks following release from HMYOI Polmont. Consequently many breached their orders and were returned to custody.

### Views from the young men

The young men involved in the focus group, came from the CIU and were due to be released on some form of statutory supervision. A common perception, was that they had not been prepared adequately for release into the community by HMYOI Polmont. One spoke warmly of their social worker in the community as being the person they had had most contact with (rather than anyone within HMYOI Polmont). Another member of the group had undertaken a high number of the programmes on offer in HMYOI Polmont, had gained some qualifications and was now on placement in the community. However he had not yet had a pathways interview and was anxious about what the future held (he was due to be released in two weeks). Only a few of the group had developed CVs – one did not know what a CV was.

### **Views on the transfer of women from HMP & YOI Cornton Vale**

Nearly every staff member spoken to did not consider that women being housed in HMYOI Polmont would pose a challenge. Unit managers acknowledged that some of the young men might well be resentful of the changes because they would be required to double-up, and those moved out of Blair to facilitate the planning for

women no longer had access to in-cell showers. This resentment was indeed bubbling amongst the group of young men in the focus group.

### **Conclusions and overall assessment**

To conclude, the overall vision for HMYOI Polmont was a sound one, but the process of transition to a regime which could deliver this vision requires careful change management.

At present, key features which would support delivery are not functioning to their optimal level including the personal officer system and the positive futures planning. Consequently many of the young men were disengaged from the very wide range of services, support and learning opportunities available in HMYOI Polmont.

Staff morale may have been affected by the rapid pace of change, when successful implementation of the broader vision will be predicated on mobilising the support of all staff, and particularly those working in the residential halls.

HMYOI Polmont was looking confidently forward to the move of women into the institution from HMP & YOI Cornton Vale. The optimism may be somewhat misplaced given that more recent changes were not yet embedded within day-to-day routines, and the personal officer role so vital to the promotion of desistance and a gatekeeper to activities, was not working well.

### **Acknowledgements**

I am very grateful to all the young men, visitors and staff who took time out to be involved in meetings, focus groups and informal conversations. I would like to thank the Inspectorate for inviting me to participate in this longitudinal inspection and for providing such support.

## PROFESSOR McARA'S EVIDENCE GATHERING

In addition to a review of the documentation provided by HMYOI Polmont, evidence was gathered as follows:

### Day 1

Areas observed:

- Blair
- Iona (remand)
- Open visits room
- Closed visits section including provision for Skype visits
- Visitor waiting room

In conversation with:

- Blair: two passmen and one offender; unit manager
- Iona: two passmen and two prison officers
- Visit room and closed visits area: one prison officer who is normally located in reception; two staff in the closed visit section
- Visitor waiting room: four women visitors (two were accompanied with children, one was pregnant)

### Day 2

Areas observed:

- Activities 1 including the Library
- Iona (top flat)

In conversation with:

- Activities 1: prison officers manning the reception desk; leader of the Peer Mentoring Scheme; a librarian
- Iona: one personal officer

Individual meeting:

- Community Liaison Police Officer (who also runs the Community Safety Teambuilding and Leadership Course)

Focus group:

- Personal officers (five) (from Iona, Blair and Munro)

### **Day 3**

Areas observed:

- Visit hall
- Munro

In conversation with:

- One visitor (grandmother of offender)
- Prison officer overseeing visits

Individual meeting:

- Family Contact Officer (with the Deputy Chief inspector of Prisons)

Focus groups:

- Throughcare Support Officers (two) (conducted in collaboration with the Care Inspector)
- Unit managers (two from activities; two from residential halls)
- Young men (seven) from Munro, about to leave the prison on some form of statutory supervision (conducted in collaboration with the Care Inspector)

## Prison population profile on 31 May 2016

<b>Status</b>	<b>Number of prisoners</b>
Untried Male Adults	3
Untried Female Adults	n/a
Untried Male Young Offenders	103
Untried Female Young Offenders	n/a
Sentenced Male Adults	57
Sentenced Female Adults	n/a
Sentenced Male Young Offenders	298
Sentence Female Young Offenders	n/a
Recalled Life Prisoners	0
Convicted Prisoners Awaiting Sentencing	41
Prisoners Awaiting Deportation	0
Under 16s	0
Civil Prisoners	0
Home Detention Curfew	0
<b>Sentence</b>	<b>Number of prisoners</b>
Untried/ Remand	106
0 – 1 month	2
1 – 2 months	0
2 – 3 months	2
3 – 4 months	4
4 – 5 months	5
5 – 6 months	8
6 months to less than 12 months	51
12 months to less than 2 years	103
2 years to less than 4 years	94
4 years to less than 10 years	68
10 years and over (not life)	3
Life	7
Order for Lifelong Restriction	1
<b>Age</b>	<b>Number of prisoners</b>
Minimum age:	16 years 3 months
Under 21 years	426
21 years to 29 years	62
30 years to 39 years	n/a
40 years to 49 years	n/a
50 years to 59 years	n/a
60 years to 69 years	n/a
70 years plus	n/a
Maximum age:	22 years 10 months
<b>Total number of prisoners</b>	<b>502</b>

Data provided by SPS.

**Inspection Team**

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**Acronyms**

ACT2Care	SPS suicide prevention strategy
ASDAN	Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network
CIU	Community Integration Unit
CSCS	Construction Skills Certification Scheme
CSU	Community Safety Unit
CV	Curriculum Vitae
FCO	Family Contact Officer
GIRFEC	Getting it right for every child
GP	General Practitioner
HMP	Her Majesty's Prison
HMP & YOI	Her Majesty's Prison & Young Offender Institution
HMYOI	Her Majesty's Young Offender Institution
ICM	Integrated Case Management
NHS	National Health Service
PFPs	Positive Future Plans
PR2	the SPS electronic prisoner records system – version 2
RMT	Risk Management Team
SPS	Scottish Prison Service
TSO	Throughcare Support Officer
WSA	Whole System Approach
YOI	Young Offender's Institution



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