



## UK NPM statement on the Committee for the Prevention of Torture's (CPT) report on their ad hoc Visit to Scotland in June 2025

2 July 2026

The UK NPM welcomes the findings of the Council of Europe Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT), who visited Scotland in June 2025 for an ad hoc, unannounced visit focussing on the treatment of men, women and children in prisons, police custody and secure care. The visit followed two previous visits to Scotland in 2018 and 2019.<sup>1</sup>

The CPT possesses extensive expertise on the treatment of people deprived of their liberty, and evaluates treatment and conditions based on internationally recognised standards. Visits from the CPT are extremely valuable opportunities for duty bearers to receive expert advice on specific actions that can be taken to promote dignity and respect for human rights, and we hope they are received in that spirit.

During their visit, the CPT delegation visited five prisons, two secure accommodation services, and five police custody centres.<sup>2</sup> The delegation also met with several NPM bodies and the Head of the UK NPM Secretariat, in addition to members of civil society.

### Findings

The UK NPM was pleased to see many examples of positive practice recognised by the CPT. This reflects findings of NPM bodies across Scotland, who have similarly witnessed a catalogue of good practices during inspections and monitoring visits. We recognise the dedication and hard work of all those working with people deprived of their liberty who are realising those good practices every day.

At the same time, many concerns reported by the UK NPM were echoed in the CPT's report, and some recommendations were repeated from past visits. For example, in the [Review, Recommend, Repeat report](#) (SHRC & NPM, July 2024), we highlighted that the CPT had recommended urgent measures to tackle prison overcrowding in Scotland in 2019, and that "While there has been a range of legal and policy initiatives to address overcrowding and provide alternatives to sentencing, these mechanisms have not succeeded in reducing prison numbers. The prison population continues to rise well beyond the capacity of the prison estate." Despite these recommendations, the CPT found in this most recent report that Scotland's prisons are now more overcrowded than in their previous visit.

The UK NPM therefore applauds the CPT's recommendations around prison overcrowding. Cells of 7m<sup>2</sup> and smaller being shared by two people fall far below a decent amount of space to share with another person. While those who had work or accessed activities spoke positively about them, overcrowding and staff shortages led to frequent cancellation, while those who did not work or access educational activities could be locked in cell for up to 23 hours a day. Remand prisoners had less access to work and activities, and spent most of the day inside their cells or at the Halls.

Since the CPT's visit, the NPM notes that, despite emergency release measures, the number of people in prisons has continued to grow, leading to a Scottish Government

<sup>1</sup> The UK NPM commissioned a report to examine the follow up from their reports which published in 2021, [Full-report-on-Scotlands-progress-in-the-prevention-of-ill-treatment-in-places-of-detention.pdf](#).

<sup>2</sup> Establishments Visited by CPT Delegation in 2025: HMP Low Moss, HMP Barlinnie, HMP YOI Stirling, HMP YOI Polmont, HMP YOI Bella, St Mary's Kenmure Secure Accommodation, Rossie Secure Accommodation, 5x Police Custody Settings

consultation launched last week on measures to address the crisis. An interim service model for female high secure patients was opened in the State Hospital in July 2025.

In their report, the CPT also noted repeated recommendations in other areas, including the long-term use of separation and reintegration units (SRUs), the need for improved treatment, regime and conditions in men's prisons, and the excessive length of time taken to complete Fatal Accident Inquiries following deaths in prison custody, the need for all detainee injuries to be immediately and properly documented and the need for natural light in all police custody cells, among others.

We encourage the Scottish Government and duty bearers to take swift and decisive action on the CPT's recommendations, before priorities move on, so that they do not end up in the cycle of continuously repeated recommendations.

The CPT report contained wide-ranging observations and recommendations. The UK NPM would like to highlight a few areas of note and encourages readers to review the full report.<sup>3</sup>

1. A coherent strategy for admission and release to reduce overcrowding in men's prisons, which is seriously compromising living conditions.
2. Regime and meaningful contact for prisoners in SRUs must be improved, and strategies are needed to prevent repeated separation of prisoners. An SRU is an inappropriate environment for prisoners with mental disorders.
3. The need for robust supervision and training, alongside legislation and safeguards, to ensure equal standards across children's secure care.
4. The reduction of persons held in police custody facilities for longer than 24 hours (i.e. especially between Friday and Monday mornings), notably through the opening of some Saturday courts.

In terms of positive practice, the CPT rightly commended the move to end custody of children under 18 in prisons, and on the significant reform of the women's prison estate, including the smaller Community Custody Units (CCUs). To build on these improvements, the Committee recommended continued investment to address unequal access to CCUs, which are more therapeutic and offer more psychosocial support than Scotland's traditional women's prisons.

Rachel Lindsay, Chair of the UK NPM, said:

"I thank the CPT for its detailed report and constructive recommendations. The UK NPM is grateful for the continued support in scrutiny from our international partners. While the CPT recognised progress made in several areas of deprivation of liberty in Scotland, there is still much work to do to ensure an acceptable standard of treatment and conditions for people deprived of their liberty. The UK NPM will reflect on the full report and how we can continue to support necessary changes in all detention settings, as part of our mandate under OPCAT."

Rosemary Agnew, Chair of the UK NPM Scotland Subgroup, on which she represents the Scottish Human Rights Commission, said:

"The UK NPM Scotland Subgroup closely monitors progress on recommendations made by the CPT, alongside our own recommendations. We are pleased to see that progress has been made in many areas, and hope that duty bearers will continue to build on these developments by acting quickly and boldly on the CPT's most recent recommendations. The findings in the CPT's report demonstrate the value of independent scrutiny in promoting improved treatment and conditions for people deprived of their liberty."

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<sup>3</sup> European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, [Visit Report, Scotland, June 2025 – CPT/Inf \(2026\) 19](#)

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