**Our work in Scotland’s prisons**

As part of the Commission’s mandate to promote and protect human rights, we have an explicit duty to protect the most vulnerable people in our society and we have the right to enter some places of detention.

The Commission carries out work in the following areas:

**Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland (HMIPS)**

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland is required to inspect the 15 prison establishments throughout Scotland in order to examine the treatment of and the conditions for prisoners.

The Commission has been invited to join prison inspectors on a selected number of Scottish prisons during 2015-2016 2015 as part of a trial scheme, and is providing in-depth human rights knowledge to inspectors. This will be reviewed in April 2016.

**Independent Monitoring of Prisons**

The new system of Independent Prison Monitoring came into force in 2015. Independent monitors are essential in helping to ensure that prisoners’ human rights are upheld and that life in prison contributes to their rehabilitation. Independent monitors are volunteers, and provide feedback on the treatment and conditions for prisoners, including conducting investigations. The new service is subject to regular review through an Advisory Group set up by the Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland, which has an independent Chair and includes representation from the Scottish Human Rights Commission, alongside other agencies and civil society organisations. Dr Alan Mitchell, a Commissioner at SHRC, is the Chair of the Advisory Group.

**National Preventative Mechanism**

The United Nations Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT) requires State Parties to establish an independent National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) to undertake inspections, and other preventive activity. The NPM has the right to inspect regularly all places of detention for the purpose of monitoring the treatment and conditions of detainees, with the clear purpose of preventing ill treatment of anyone deprived of their liberty.The Commission is one of 18 independent bodies in Scottish and the UK who draw directly on human rights standards when monitoring places of detention as part of NPM. An annual report [link] is published giving an overview of the state of detention in prisons, police custody, court cells, customs custody facilities, children’s secure accommodation, immigration, military and mental health detention.

**Scottish Prison Service**

The Commission will provide an information session on human rights based approach and impact assessments to strengthen the current policies and reporting procedures.