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Prison guards routinely turn a blind eye to illegal activities inside crisis-hit Addiewell prison, according to whistleblowers.

The allegations regarding the West Lothian institution were made by insiders sickened by the way the privately-operated jail is being run. They come after the Record yesterday revealed shocking images of an inmate kissing a warder at the jail. The crisis in the prison has prompted calls for the Scottish Government to step in and sort out the jail, run by Sodexo.

Whistleblowers told how:

- Organised crime gangs are controlling the institution.
- Management believe “staff cost them money, prisoners make them money”.
- Broken alarm systems are not being repaired because it would cost too much money.
- Staff are encouraged to play down incidents on reports and safety is secondary to profit.

The whistleblowers have also claimed relationships between prisoners and officers are “rife” and several staff members have been suspended or sacked for smuggling in contraband.

Yesterday we told how a cocky convict secretly filmed himself kissing a prison officer for bragging rights with other cons. The video shows Addiewell prisoner Kevin Hogg in a passionate clinch with warder Rachel Wilson after she enters his cell. Insiders said it’s just one incident which shows how out of control the prison is. Politicians are now demanding that the Scottish Government looks into the claims and ensures staff have the resources to be able to do their jobs effectively. The whistleblower said: “There is problem after problem. Staff have been known to walk out with keys in their pockets because the biometric slider system is broken and has been for so long. “They’ve been caught going out with alarm fobs and not getting sacked and management said it’s because it would cost £2.5million to replace the locks and they just keep it quiet so the Scottish Prison Service don’t find out and they save money.

“Management have asked staff to underplay incidents on report sheets, especially if they want to ship a certain prisoner out the jail because they’re having bother with them. They’d say, ‘Just go and say this,’ and you get POs [prison officers] who do it because they don’t want sacked or to be out of the clique within the prison.” Whistleblower claims gangs run Addiewell jail and prison guards ‘turn blind eye’ He added: “Staff have been forced to resign because they’ve been caught bringing in packages and stuff, at least four of them. Another staff member was recently caught sleeping with a prisoner. Relationships with the inmates is a regular occurrence.” The whistleblower went on: “Violence against staff is horrific as well. The POs are scared of the prisoners, they’re not being trained properly – the prisoners are in charge, without a doubt. “In other wings, ill prisoners or prisoners needing hospital treatment have been left for days without being seen because the staff forget or there’s a lack of awareness or they just can’t be bothered to write the reports. “Prisoners like the weekend because they know there’s not enough staff to deal with them. “They will co-ordinate incidents to kick off because they know there’s not enough first response teams to cover. “They find it funny. It’s dangerous for the staff because all it would take is one or two incidents to kick off where staff need help and there’s not enough people on shift to get to them. “Staff morale is through the floor. The nickname for the prison is SPS training school. People come in and move on to the prison service.” The whistleblower claimed the warders may only have interpersonal skills to fall back on in violent situations. He added: “But if a prisoner is running at you with a weapon, telling him to think of the consequences isn’t going to cut it. He’s going to plunge that weapon right in. “We are given basic safety training but you need back-up and most of the time it’s not there. When anyone is attacked by a prisoner it’s a case of clean up the blood and get back on the floor. “The prisoner is not - sanctioned. Officers are routinely threatened by the prisoners and blind eyes are turned on it.” Last night, leading politicians called on the Scottish Government to get a grip on the crisis-hit jail. Scottish Conservative community safety spokesman, Russell Findlay MSP, said: “Prison officers deserve - recognition and gratitude for dealing with Scotland’s most dangerous and depraved people. “But the public must have faith that prisons do not become safe places for organised crime gangs who already wield far too much power throughout society. Whistleblower claims gangs run Addiewell jail and prison guards ‘turn blind eye’ “This prison is known to house members of the gangs responsible for large quantities of drugs in our communities. “These thugs need to understand it’s the staff who run the place, not them, and the SNP Government needs to ensure staff have the resources and support they need to do their jobs safely and effectively. “Any reports of officers becoming compromised or controlled by criminals must be taken seriously. “We owe staff a duty of care but those who become involved in illegality must be rooted out and held to account.” Labour MSP Pauline McNeill said: “A weak regime is

not in the interests of staff or prisoner safety. "There has been controversy for some time on private prisons and whether they are spending adequately on staff training and investing in proper practices. "There has to be greater scrutiny over private prisons like Addiewell and as a matter of urgency we should consider bring it back to public control if standards are found wanting. "In the short term, prison management should review all practices and training and recruitment processes." HMP Addiewell said: "We are committed to running a prison that is safe for all who live and work there. "We take whistleblower allegations very seriously and have processes in place to ensure that these are swiftly looked into and that whistleblowers' rights are protected. "We can be clear that procedures are in place to ensure proper security levels are maintained and areas are risk assessed."