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## Public Audit Committee

# The 2022/23 audit of the Scottish Prison Service



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# Public Audit Committee

To consider and report on the following (and any additional matter added under Rule 6.1.5A)—

- (a) any accounts laid before the Parliament;
- (b) any report laid before or made to the Parliament by the Auditor General for Scotland; and
- (c) any other document laid before the Parliament, or referred to it by the Parliamentary Bureau or by the Auditor General for Scotland, concerning financial control, accounting and auditing in relation to public expenditure.

2. No member of the Scottish Government or junior Scottish Minister may be a member of the Committee and no member who represents a political party which is represented in the Scottish Government may be convener of the Committee.



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# Committee Membership



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# Membership changes

1. Membership changes of the Public Audit Committee during the reporting period are:
  - Sharon Dowey MSP (from 23 June 2021 - 08 February 2024)
  - Jamie Greene MSP (from 8 February 2024 - present)

# Introduction

2. Through its scrutiny of reports prepared by the Auditor General for Scotland (AGS) and Audit Scotland, the Public Audit Committee examines whether public funds are being spent wisely and holds to account those who are charged with spending public money. In all our work, we aim to make a difference to the quality of public services in Scotland.
3. The 2022/23 audit of the Scottish Prison Service (the section 22 report) was laid in Parliament on 12 December 2023. In the section 22 report, the AGS states his reasons for reporting to Parliament—  
  

” My report brings to the Scottish Parliament’s attention issues relating to the Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting Services (SCCPES) contract managed by SPS on behalf of the Justice Multi Agency Liaison Group, as well as wider concerns about the projected increases in the prisoner population and the impact this will have on the prison estate. <sup>1</sup>
4. To inform its consideration of the report, the Committee took oral evidence from the following stakeholders:
  - Auditor General for Scotland, 1 February 2024
  - Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland, HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland, 14 March 2024
  - GEOAmey PECS Ltd, 28 March 2024
  - Scottish Prison Service (SPS) and the Scottish Government, 2 May 2024.
5. The Committee also received a wide range of written evidence, including from organisations operating in the justice sector and relevant trade unions. All written evidence received by the Committee can be found on its webpage. <sup>2</sup>
6. The Committee is grateful to everyone who has contributed to its scrutiny of the section 22 report.
7. The Committee will also draw this report to the attention of the Scottish Parliament’s Criminal Justice Committee.



# The Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting Services contract

## Background

8. The Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting Services (SCCPES) contract (the contract) was awarded to GEOAmeY PECS Ltd (GEOAmeY) by Scottish Ministers in March 2018. The contract commenced in January 2019 and is for a period of eight years, with the option to extend by a further four years. The section 22 report states that the estimated value of the contract when awarded was between £238 million and £250 million, over the initial eight-year term.
9. The SPS is responsible for managing the contract on behalf of the Justice Multi Agency Liaison Group (MALG). This group includes representation from SPS, the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS), the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) and Police Scotland.<sup>1</sup>
10. During evidence, the Committee heard that GEOAmeY currently provides prisoner escort services on behalf of the Ministry for Justice in England and Wales. The section 22 report sets out additional requirements which are included in the Scottish contract—
  - ” In Scotland, the contract provides for the safe and secure transfer of prisoners between specified locations such as prisons, courts, police custody units and healthcare facilities. It also includes additional services such as funeral escorts; bed watch activity when those in custody are detained for medical treatment; and transfers to Police Scotland interviews and identification parades.<sup>1</sup>
11. The section 22 report also states that delivery of the contract is “critical to the effective operation of the criminal justice system in Scotland”.<sup>1</sup> It goes on to set out the risks associated with the contract, should GEOAmeY fail to deliver the required levels of service—
  - ” These include the impact on prisoner welfare; the reputational risk to SPS and other justice partners; and the ability to deliver effective services and achieve value for money.<sup>1</sup>
12. During evidence, GEOAmeY described the section 22 report as “balanced and accurate”.<sup>3</sup> In its written submission to the Committee, GEOAmeY also recognised the interdependencies of the Scottish criminal justice system and acknowledged that—
  - ” any shortfall in performance on our part has the potential to negatively impact other services.<sup>4</sup>

## Delivery of the contract

13. During oral evidence, the AGS explained that “in general terms, the contract performed as intended before the pandemic”.<sup>5</sup> However, the section 22 report states that—
- ” Since mid-2021, GEOAmeY has failed to deliver the requirements of the SCCPES contract in several key areas. This includes court arrivals, court returns and non-court appointments.<sup>1</sup>
14. When giving evidence to the Committee, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland raised a concern that the unacceptable drops in performance relating to the SCCPES contract, such as those leading to the cancellation of hospital appointments were a breach in human rights.
15. When asked by the Committee where ultimate responsibility lay for human rights obligations, the Scottish Government’s Director-General Education and Justice confirmed that “ultimate responsibility for our prisons rests with the Scottish Ministers”.<sup>6</sup>

## Changes to the operating environment

16. The section 22 report highlighted that during the Covid-19 pandemic, SPS provided GEOAmeY with £6.3 million financial support “to ensure normal contract delivery by avoiding staff being furloughed”. It also reported that the introduction of temporary virtual courts and social distancing measures “changed the nature and type” of the work required.<sup>1</sup>
17. In evidence to the Committee, SPS stated that post-pandemic—
- ” We altered the contract on two or three occasions. The justice sector had asked GEOAmeY to pick up additional work in the police custody cells and with virtual court work, for example...<sup>6</sup>
18. The ways in which the operating environment have changed since the contract was awarded to GEOAmeY, specifically since Covid-19 restrictions were lifted, was also highlighted in the section 22 report. These include—
- ” ...higher prisoner numbers have seen increased volumes of prison-to-prison transfers and greater volumes of hospital appointments and bed-watches. There has also been changing demands on prisoner court transfer numbers requiring the use of smaller fleet vehicles but using the same number of escort staff.<sup>1</sup>
19. The section 22 report explains that the contract is volume-led and that the changes to demand levels or the type of escort required, have an impact on the service levels required of GEOAmeY and therefore the level of payments made to them. It also states that GEOAmeY reported to SPS that the changes in service requirement post-Covid had made the contract financially unsustainable. This included “changes in the demand profile and new initiatives to address the backlog of court cases arising from the pandemic.”<sup>1</sup>

20. The Committee heard in evidence that the following key issues had a significant impact on the contract's operating environment since the Covid-19 pandemic:
- A higher prisoner population due to increased convictions for serious and historical crimes
  - A more complex and ageing prisoner population with increasing social care needs
  - Increased court capacity to tackle criminal court backlogs
  - A changing labour market leading to recruitment and retention of staff challenges.

### Higher prisoner population

21. During oral evidence, the Committee heard from the AGS that in 2022/23 the average prisoner population was 7,426. The AGS went on to explain that this figure was projected to rise to 7,948, with forecasts predicting further increases in prisoner numbers to around 8,166 by the end of March 2024.
22. During oral evidence, the Chief Executive of SPS confirmed that as of 30 April 2024, the prison population had risen to 8,246, which she described as being “more complex than ever and is at its highest since the last population spike, which was in 2019”.<sup>6</sup>
23. HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland told the Committee during oral evidence that—
- ” We are holding people for more serious offences and for longer periods, which leads to an increased population.”<sup>7</sup>

### A complex and ageing prisoner population

24. The Committee notes that while the prison population continues to increase, it is also becoming more complex. SPS explained to the Committee during oral evidence that the number of prisoners who require support and social care has increased.
25. The Chief Executive of SPS told the Committee during oral evidence that over the past two or three years, data and evidence has been published on the health condition of people who come into custody that shows—
- ” ...they are from some of our most deprived areas, so it is not unexpected that they will have chronic health conditions, particularly in relation to drug and alcohol use and mental health.”<sup>6</sup>
26. The section 22 report highlights an ageing prison population, reporting that in 2022/23, a total of 16.4 per cent of the prison population was aged 51 or over, with 287 prisoners aged between 61 to 70 and a further 130 prisoners aged over 70.
27. During evidence, Audit Scotland told the Committee that when the SCCPES

contract was awarded, it allowed for up to eight bed watches a day, but that this figure fluctuates to “sometimes well over 20”. Audit Scotland added that bed watch activities are “a very staff-intensive part of the contract for GEOAmeY, which is one of the reasons that it cites for the contract being financially unsustainable”.<sup>5</sup>

### Increased capacity to tackle criminal court backlogs

28. As part of its scrutiny of the AGS’s [report on the Criminal courts backlog](#), the Committee heard that the courts recovery programme, introduced in September 2021, significantly increased Scotland’s criminal court capacity leading to criminal courts operating above their pre-Covid-19 capacity. In 2022/23, the Scottish Government provided funding of £29 million to SCTS to help continue to address the courts backlog by increasing court capacity.
29. The AGS told the Committee during oral evidence that, in relation to court transfers, the demands prior to the Covid-19 pandemic would have been “fairly predictable and stable, but that is no longer exactly the case”.<sup>5</sup>

### Impact on the delivery of the contract

30. In respect of the increased bed watch activities and court capacity, GEOAmeY told the Committee during oral evidence that post the Covid-19 pandemic—
- ” ...we are operating 38 per cent more High Court docks than we did prior to that period, and 44 per cent more solemn cases in Scotland. That has a huge impact on our resource. If we shift to looking at settings out with the courts, we are managing 35 per cent more bed watches, which is a different area of service that we facilitate. When we look at the operation in the round, therefore, it is a very different one with a very different level of demand.”<sup>3</sup>
31. GEOAmeY’s Managing Director told the Committee that the changes in demand had led to—
- ” ...an operating environment that we could not have contemplated and that the contracted model that we went through certainly could not have accommodated in any way.”<sup>3</sup>
32. Similarly, during oral evidence, the Chief Executive of SPS acknowledged this unforeseen change in the operating environment stating—
- ” To be fair, both to GEOAmeY, us and our justice partners, none of us could have anticipated what was to come and, therefore, anticipated that as part of the contractual arrangements.”<sup>6</sup>
33. During evidence, the AGS told the Committee that—
- ” There are opportunities to make the contract more efficient, but I am not sure that that addresses the more fundamental point that the environment is quite different from what it was when the contract was first awarded.”<sup>5</sup>

## Recruitment and retention of staff

34. In addition to the changing operating environment, the Committee heard during oral evidence that GEOAmeY has faced ‘acute’ challenges in the recruitment and retention of staff.<sup>4</sup> The section 22 report states that GEOAmeY has been unable to achieve the staffing levels required to effectively deliver the contract.
35. The report further states that while GEOAmeY achieved the staffing levels required to deliver the contract over its first two years, it has not been able to do so since 2021. Figures set out in the section 22 report show that in October 2023, “GEOAmeY’s staffing levels dropped to around 520 full-time equivalents, a decrease of between 20 and 25 per cent on required levels”.<sup>1</sup>
36. In its written evidence, GEOAmeY states that its “rate of staff attrition rose markedly during April 2021”, and that the social distancing measures in place made it difficult to “move new recruits through the necessary induction modules to fill the vacancies” leading to its net officer headcount levels reducing as the volume of work began to increase again.<sup>4</sup>
37. During evidence, GEOAmeY told the Committee about the challenges it faced in competing with a very competitive employment market following the end of the Covid-19 pandemic—
- ” We have had to effectively compete with other agencies within our sector that have more attractive packages, which is quite rare, and larger organisations that have greater and more structured career paths than we do. Not everyone wants to work in this sector and, if the people who do can go to alternative parts of the sector—the police, the courts and the prison service, as well as the immigration service—that all pay considerably more than the prisoner escorting contracts have ever done, they will go to them and we will struggle.<sup>3</sup>
38. The Committee heard from GEOAmeY that its hourly rate of pay for its prison custody officers in 2020 was £9.85. During evidence, the AGS stated that—
- ” It is fair to say that the question of how attractive prisoner custody officer roles are in comparison to alternative jobs is at the heart of this issue. At a high level, the general rates of pay that the prisoner custody officer roles attract are comparable with what someone could earn in a supermarket, for example. Bearing in mind their conditions, these are demanding and responsible jobs—that is not to say that supermarket jobs are not, but the custody officer roles come with an additional level of stress and scrutiny. A combination of factors, such as changing aspirations and employment patterns, has meant that GEOAmeY has not been able to sustain the numbers to safely deliver the contract.<sup>5</sup>
39. The difficulties faced by GEOAmeY in relation to staffing were also noted by SPS, who told the Committee that—
- ” We could see on the horizon that the economic situation was changing, and the company was haemorrhaging staff, predominantly to the retail trade.<sup>6</sup>

40. **The Committee recognises the efforts of all frontline staff who routinely work in challenging and difficult circumstances to support Scotland's justice sector.**
41. **It is clear that no one single factor led to GEOAmeys failure to effectively deliver the Scottish Courts Custody Prison Escorting Services contract. The evidence shows that a combination of factors including staffing issues, an increasing prison population with more complex health needs and an increased court capacity aimed at addressing court backlogs all contributed to failures within the contract.**
42. **The Committee recognises that there have been significant changes to the operating environment of the Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting Services contract since the Covid-19 pandemic, some of which could not have been foreseen. However, we consider that data and evidence collected on the health condition of people coming into custody could have been used to better plan for the increasingly complex healthcare needs of prisoners.**
43. **We share HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland's concerns on how the Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting Services contract is impacting on the human rights of prisoners, particularly in relation to their ability to access healthcare when required.**
44. **The Committee supports the Auditor General for Scotland's view that there are opportunities to make the contract more efficient. We therefore recommend that the Scottish Prison Service, the wider Justice Multi Agency Liaison Group and GEOAmeys continue to explore these opportunities as a matter of urgency. The Committee also recommends that the Scottish Government engages constructively in these discussions.**

## **Action taken to support the delivery of the contract**

45. The section 22 report states that since mid-2021, GEOAmeys failed to deliver the requirements of the SCCPES contract in several key areas, including court arrivals, court returns and non-court appointments.
46. The report sets out the action taken by SPS in relation to GEOAmeys specific failures in complying with its obligations under the contract. This includes serving five improvement notices, which required GEOAmeys to either immediately undertake remedial action or submit a 'time bound action plan' to address the issues. Two improvement notices were served in relation to hospital appointments. A further three were in respect of court cell and court docks delivery, Video Identification Parade Electronic Recording (VIPER parades) and data accuracy and verification.<sup>1</sup>
47. During evidence, SPS explained that it had applied the improvement notices—



” ...to make the contract work under the commercial arrangements, but it became clear that that was not going to be the case and that a change of action was required.<sup>6</sup>

48. In the evidence it received, the Committee heard of additional steps that SPS and its MALG partners have since taken to support GEOAmeY and to help avoid the contract failing, which are set out below.

### Financial support for the recruitment and retention of staff

49. In October 2023, SPS agreed revised payment rates aimed at supporting GEOAmeY to recruit and retain staff. This allowed GEOAmeY to increase its hourly rates by around 17 per cent at an additional cost to SPS of “£1.8 million in 2023/24 and £2.2 million per annum thereafter”.<sup>1</sup>

50. During oral evidence, Audit Scotland described this as “pass-through funding”, designed to be passed directly to staff to increase pay rates and take them to a competitive level compared to other equivalent employers.

51. When giving evidence to the Committee in February 2024, the AGS stated—

” The SPS has taken action to support improvement in GEOAmeY’s performance, including financial support to aid staff recruitment and retention, but that is expected to take a further six months to take effect.<sup>5</sup>

52. GEOAmeY confirmed to the Committee during evidence that since receiving this additional funding—

” We have had an uplift in our officer availability. In a relatively short period, we have gone from that low of 515 officers to more than 600 officers. Our projections are that, come Q3 this year, we will be at around the 650 or 660 mark, so we will be at, or close to, our target operating model of 670.<sup>3</sup>

53. During oral evidence, SPS stated that—

” By providing additional funding, we have enabled GEOAmeY to pass that funding on to its employees and we now get levels of service that mean that GEOAmeY can operate without penalties or with minimal penalties.<sup>6</sup>

54. In follow up written evidence to the Committee, GEOAmeY confirmed that its pay rates for prison custody officers from 1 May 2024 would be £13.25.

### Removing financial penalties

55. The section 22 report confirms that SPS also issued a number of service credits where performance had failed. It goes on to explain that these are credits applied to payments where the specified service level has not been met and are designed to provide focus on specific issues, “with the aim of encouraging resolutions to be identified and implemented within a short timeframe”.<sup>1</sup>

56. The section 22 report further states—

” Between 2019/20 and 2022/23, service credits totalling over £4 million had been applied with further credits expected for performance failures during 2023/24. <sup>1</sup>

57. Audit Scotland explained in oral evidence that SPS implemented a moratorium on applying certain service credits in August 2022, covering issues such as “late arrivals that do not impact on proceedings” <sup>5</sup>. Audit Scotland also explained that some aspects of the contract such as the provision of documentation and ensuring prisoners have access to food, water and medical advice are not covered by the moratorium. The section 22 report states that this step was taken to reduce the potential financial burden and to allow GEOAmeY to refocus on improving key areas of the contract. The report also states that further changes were made during 2023 to reduce the impact of performance measures and the number of applicable service credits.

58. During evidence to the Committee, SPS explained that—

” Some of the service credits that were in the contract were punitive and not helping the contractor, and we adjusted them on two or three occasions. That was to allow the contractor the flexibility to increase its headcount and to push forward its recruitment. <sup>6</sup>

59. SPS confirmed in written evidence that a moratorium on service credits was in place from August 2022 to September 2023, including those for court arrivals, returns and non-court appointments. It further stated that service credits were issued between April 2023 and September 2023, based on GEOAmeY’s performance over that period which totalled £899,420.54. SPS also confirmed that no service credits have been applied since 1 October 2023. This decision will be subject to ratification of GEOAmeY’s performance levels which will be submitted by GEOAmeY for consideration at the end of May 2024. <sup>8</sup>

### Scheduling of hospital appointments

60. The section 22 report states that one of the additional steps SPS has taken to support the delivery of the contract is to request that the NHS avoid the scheduling of hospital appointments prior to 9.30 am to help avoid clashes with court appearances. The report further states that—

” GEOAmeY advised that while SPS attempted to provide support in this area, the majority of appointments are still at the same time that court deliveries are scheduled. <sup>1</sup>

61. The Committee heard from GEOAmeY during oral evidence that, based on its experience of the service it delivers in other jurisdictions, it had assumed that medical appointments would be scheduled for “after the court arrival phase” <sup>3</sup>. GEOAmeY went on to state—



- ” However, the operational reality is that 46 per cent of medical appointments are scheduled before 10:30. That means that the resources that are dedicated to taking people to court are reallocated and redeployed to those medical appointments.<sup>3</sup>
62. The AGS also referred to a clash between the timings of prisoner hospital appointments and transfers to court during oral evidence and suggested that work between SPS and NHS Scotland to address the issue was “still a work in progress”<sup>5</sup>.
63. Written evidence from the Chief Executive of NHS Scotland sets out that the National Prison Care Network met with SPS in relation to GEOAmeys performance regarding healthcare appointments, in September 2023. The Chief Executive also confirmed that following this meeting, Prison Healthcare Teams were requested to take several actions, including scheduling prisoner’s medical appointments after 11.00 am. The Chief Executive further confirmed that they had also written to all NHS Boards and Medical Directors requesting that people living in prison are not given appointments before 9.30 am.<sup>9</sup>
64. SPS confirmed during evidence to the Committee that significant improvement had been made in this area and that GEOAmeys were now meeting 84.1 per cent of hospital appointments, compared to 67 per cent in November 2023.

### Recalibration of the contract

65. As described by Audit Scotland above, bed watch activities are “staff intensive” and while the contract, when awarded, allowed for eight bed watches, demand sometimes fluctuated to requiring over 20. The Committee heard from GEOAmeys that discussions with SPS and its MALG partners led to a recalibration of the contract in relation to bed watch duties. GEOAmeys stated that—
- ” ...if we were sat at 16 bed watches—the number could be higher; it could be 20—in addition to having to staff more bed watches, we had to keep aside extra staff in case the number went to 17, to 18 or higher. That meant that six to 10 crews were kept aside for that potential increase when they could have been deployed for a hospital appointment, for example.<sup>3</sup>
66. GEOAmeys explained to the Committee that the contract has been recalibrated and now its obligation for bed watch duties is 13, with a cap of 14 and that this—
- ” ... relatively small change has had quite a material impact on the service.<sup>3</sup>
67. When giving evidence to the Committee, SPS confirmed improvements made by GEOAmeys in relation to bed watch activities had been consistent and that GEOAmeys were now picking up 100 per cent of bed watches meaning that SPS staff and police officers had not been required to undertake this duty.<sup>6</sup>
68. SPS told the Committee during oral evidence, that “all justice partners support the recalibration of the contract and the improvement in service delivery”<sup>6</sup>.

69. In written evidence received from SPS regarding recalibration of the contract, it highlights that while data is still subject to external ratification—
- ” ...performance has improved across many of the contractual metrics, so it is correct to say that there is an overall upward trend of improvement, although we are waiting on actual agreed levels of service delivery.”<sup>8</sup>

### Other action taken by MALG partners

70. Police Scotland’s written submission states that it has worked with GEOAmeY and other MALG partners to implement measures to support the delivery of the contract, such as rescheduling VIPER appointments outwith core court escort times and busy court days.
71. In its written submission to the Committee, COPFS stated that it has worked with SCTS to introduce a process to assist GEOAmeY staff with the throughput of court custodies. This process has resulted in “considerable additional work for COPFS staff”<sup>10</sup>. COPFS added that additional liaison between justice partners has been introduced across multiple Sheriff Courts to communicate times for individual cases to assist GEOAmeY with its contractual responsibilities and to help reduce the number of occasions where an accused has had to be kept in custody for longer than would normally be required.

72. **The Committee welcomes the steps that have been taken by the Scottish Prison Service, its MALG partners and GEOAmeY to support the delivery of the contract and mitigate the risk of contract failure.**
73. **The Committee notes the challenges faced by GEOAmeY in recruiting and retaining staff and the significant impact this has had on its ability to safely deliver the Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting Services contract. The Committee recognises that additional "pass through" funding provided to GEOAmeY by the Scottish Prison Service has improved GEOAmeY’s ability to retain existing staff and recruit new staff. We recommend that the Scottish Prison Service continues to monitor the impact of this funding to ensure it is satisfied that value for money and improved outcomes are being achieved.**
74. **The Committee recommends that the Scottish Prison Service and GEOAmeY seek to build on these improvements with a view to securing a sustainable and resilient workforce, by working together to identify and implement additional steps to recruit and retain staff while ensuring that pay rates for prison custody officers remain competitive and reflect the demands of the role.**
75. **The Committee acknowledges the steps taken by the Scottish Prison Service to remove financial penalties relating to certain performance failures to support GEOAmeY improve key areas of the contract. The Committee recommends that the moratorium on certain financial penalties is reviewed at the earliest opportunity, once GEOAmeY’s staffing**

complement is deemed sufficient to safely deliver the Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting Services contract.

76. The Committee notes the steps taken by the Scottish Prison Service and NHS Scotland to support GEOAmeY to improve its performance in relation to escorting prisoners to healthcare appointments. The Committee also welcomes the improvement in performance in this area.
77. We consider it essential that prisoners are able to access the healthcare they require in a timely way. While recognising that responsibility and accountability for the provision of healthcare services to prisoners lies with the National Health Service, and therefore ultimately Scottish Ministers, the Committee recommends that GEOAmeY's performance in this area is kept under close review, with the ambition of driving up performance figures closer to 100 per cent of all healthcare appointments as soon as possible.
78. The Committee welcomes the improvement in GEOAmeY's performance in delivering bed watch activities and recommends that performance continues to be closely monitored by the Scottish Prison Service. We also suggest that there may be scope to consider further opportunities to recalibrate the contract, based on the improvements made to bed watch performance.

## Impact on the justice sector and NHS

79. The evidence received by the Committee highlights that GEOAmeY's failure to effectively service the contract is having a considerable impact on service delivery across the justice sector. The Committee sought written evidence from the SCTS, COPFS and Police Scotland on how the performance of the contract was impacting on the services they deliver.

### Impact on courts and associated costs

80. With reference to the impact on the courts, the section 22 report states—
  - ” ...scheduled court sessions have been postponed and planned changes to jury court operations, including the development of virtual custody courts, have been delayed.<sup>1</sup>
81. The Committee received evidence from SCTS stating that it continues to “face significant impact upon trial and custody courts throughout Scotland due to the ongoing performance of the contractor”, in particular—
  - ” ...late arrival of custodies to court buildings, delays to bringing custodies from cell areas to court rooms and similar delays in bringing accused from prisons to court hearings. All have a direct impact on the efficient running of the courts, leading to delays, cancellation of hearings and late sitting courts.<sup>11</sup>
82. The Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) shared a copy of its

correspondence to the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs, dated 14 December 2023, on the impact of the GEOAmeY contract on the Scottish Justice Sector, with the Committee. In its correspondence, PCS stated—

” There have been delays in Jury Trials caused by waiting for prisoners to be brought to court with the result that jurors are inconvenienced by having to wait all day. On other occasions jury trials have been delayed by a day as accused persons have not been brought from custody causing further inconvenience to jurors and expense to the Courts.<sup>12</sup>

83. COPFS explains in its written submission that these delays mean that instead of having a “steady stream of custodies in a custody court, courts can be punctuated by long periods of inactivity”<sup>10</sup>. COPFS goes on to state that this has been particularly prominent at Glasgow Sheriff Court, where periods of around 10 minutes between each new custody case being presented have been noted.

84. SCTS’s written submission states that between 1 October 2023 to 31 December 2023, the additional time delay in processing cases was—

- Sheriff Courts - 381 hours
- High Court - 49 hours.<sup>11</sup>

85. In its written submission, SCTS states that from 1 July 2023 to 1 January 2024, 30 hearings were postponed due to issues with the accused attending court from custody. During the same period, four hearings were cancelled as the accused could not be brought from the Police Custody Unit. This includes two High Court jury trials, five Sherriff Court jury trials and 16 Sheriff Court summary trials. Estimated costs associated with these failures were provided by SCTS—

- Sheriff Court Jury Trial – £ 1,740.63 per day
- Sheriff Court Summary Trial – £1,548 per day
- High Court Trial – £2,871.54 per day.

86. COPFS also states in its written submission that due to some custody courts running late into the evening, Sheriff Principals had issued a practice note in September 2023 to regulate court finishing times. However, delays in bringing accused persons to courts has led to courts such as the custody court in Glasgow to—

” ...sit well into the evening/night, despite the Sheriff Principals’ Practice Note... COPFS considers that much of the delay relates to prisoner escort and related issues. Late running custody courts often require additional overtime payment to be incurred. It also means that some staff have been unable to work at 9 am the following day if they have been in the custody court till 10 pm.<sup>10</sup>

87. In both written and oral evidence, GEOAmeY explained to the Committee that some requirements of the contract are—

” ...simply incompatible and cannot, logistically, be delivered. An example of this would be prisoners travelling from HM Prison Perth to Dundee Sheriff Court (which is a high-volume route). Prisoners must be within the court cells by 9am per contract, but are rarely made available for transport prior to 8.30 am, meaning the 37 minute journey is automatically resulting in poor service to court users.<sup>4</sup>

88. SPS stated during oral evidence that since November 2023, the number of court arrivals on time has risen from 67 per cent to 73.3 per cent, and that the number of prisoners being returned from court on time to be safely processed back into prison had risen from 63 per cent to 74.2 per cent during the same period.

### Impact on Police Scotland and associated costs

89. During evidence, the AGS clarified that where GEOAmeY staff are unavailable, the only alternative would be to use either police officers or prison officers to carry out their duties.<sup>5</sup> This situation places additional resource pressures on Police Scotland and SPS. For example, in relation to Video Identification Parade Electronic Recording (VIPER parades). In its written submission, Police Scotland states that if legislative deadlines mean the VIPER appointment cannot be missed, then local police officers are required to leave patrol duties and provide the required escort for the prisoner<sup>i</sup>.

90. In respect of the associated time and financial resources required for VIPER appointments, Police Scotland’s written submission states that—

” Between 10 July and 24 August 2023, Police provided "step-in" support for cancelled appointments, utilising 75 Police Officers and staff to facilitate 148 hours of escort at an estimated cost of £5,000. This cost includes officer time and associated overheads.<sup>13</sup>

91. Police Scotland’s written submission goes on to state that in 2023, 143 Service Review Forms were issued to GEOAmeY in relation to contract failures where persons in police custody were either uplifted late or did not arrive at court on time. The written submission goes on to add that between 10 July and 24 August 2023, the late uplift of custodies required 58 Police Officers or staff to provide 260.5 hours of escort, with an estimated cost of £9,500 inclusive of officer time and associated overheads.<sup>13</sup>

92. A case study provided by Police Scotland in relation to custody uplifts states—

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<sup>i</sup> The section 22 report states that an Improvement Notice was issued to GEOAmeY due to 368 failures to deliver prisoners to VIPER appointments between September 2022 and January 2023.

” In June 2023, a number of persons in Police custody required to be uplifted to appear at Hamilton Sheriff Court. Police Scotland were advised that morning that uplift would not be completed until 1750 hours. Later in the afternoon, GeoAmey advised they could not accept Police Custodies due to staffing and capacity issues. 6 persons were uplifted at 1900 hours. 4 remained, 3 of which were vulnerable. GeoAmey were not in a position to accept those persons, who were eventually transported by Police to court at 2100 hours. <sup>13</sup>

93. When giving evidence to the Committee, SPS confirmed that GEOAmey’s performance in relation to escorting prisoners to VIPER parade appointments had increased to 96.2 per cent from 76 per cent in November 2023.

### Impact on the Scottish Prison Service

94. In addition to additional time that has been spent managing the SCCPES contract, SPS has also been required to redeploy some of its prison officers to help deliver prisoner escort services.

95. In correspondence to HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland, SPS stated that it reached an agreement with GEOAmey for it to provide a daily list of unfulfilled appointments. This was intended to allow establishments and justice partners to identify and subsequently seek to fulfil the work that GEOAmey was unable to carry out. The correspondence sets out a list of these activities, which demonstrates some of the additional work demands placed on SPS and its frontline staff—

- ”
- Staffing hospital detains (Bed watches) for those held in custody (above the threshold agreed with GEOAmey)
  - SPS staff escorting of those in our care to critical hospital appointments that have been identified that are critical, where GEOAmey are unable to fulfil, such as MRI’s, cancer treatments etc. This also includes the hiring of private ambulances if nonstandard vehicles in required.
  - Escorting, by SPS staff, to other non-court appointments, such as funerals, Children’s Hearings etc. <sup>14</sup>

96. Written evidence provided by the Prison Officers’ Association (POA) Scotland states that—

” Between HMP Barlinnie and HMP Perth this year there have been over 130 escorts SPS have had to carry out that falls into the GEOAmey contract. <sup>15</sup>

97. Despite the improvements in GEOAmey’s performance as reported by SPS, Audit Scotland stated during oral evidence that—

” We have found out that, even at the moment, due to service failures, the Prison Service is providing up to 20 full-time equivalent staff a day as substitutes to make some transfers, particularly higher-priority transfers for hospital appointments that need to happen at a certain time. <sup>5</sup>

98. While no financial costs were provided in relation to prison officers undertaking



these activities, the Committee is aware from the evidence received from POA that one consequence of prison officers stepping in to cover GEOAmeys role is that they are then unavailable to engage in rehabilitation work within the prison.

## Impact on the NHS

99. The section 22 report highlights that if planned hospital appointments are postponed or cancelled because the prisoner has not been transferred to the facility on time, then there is also an impact on the NHS.
100. The written submission from the Chief Executive of the NHS provides data showing the extent of healthcare appointments that have been missed and the number of cancellations made by GEOAmeys along with the number of transfers to healthcare appointments that have been provided over specific periods. For example, 13 out of 15 prisons provided data showing that there had been 826 cancelled and missed appointments between July and September 2023.

101. **It is clear that the failures in the performance and delivery of the Scottish Courts Custody Escorting Services contract have had an impact on the entire justice sector and the NHS, given the significant costs and time wasted due to court delays and missed healthcare appointments.**
102. **The Committee notes the improvement in GEOAmeys performance in transfers to and from courts and in transferring prisoners to Video Identification Parade Electronic Recording appointments. While it is encouraging to note positive signs of progress, given the disruption felt by the courts and the significant impact on police and prison officers who are taken away from their core duties to backfill capacity issues within GEOAmeys, we recommend that GEOAmeys performance is kept under review by the Scottish Prison Service.**

## Impact on prisoners

103. The section 22 report highlights two key areas where the delivery of the SCCPES contract is impacting on prisoners, namely their welfare and their rehabilitation.
104. As set out earlier in the report, two Improvement Notices have been issued to GEOAmeys in respect of hospital appointments, in December 2021 and December 2022. The section 22 report states that during the period of August to December 2022, a total of 705 hospital appointments were recorded as GEOAmeys failures. Of these, 561 appointments were cancelled by GEOAmeys due to resourcing issues and 86 appointments went ahead late.
105. Written evidence from the Chief Executive of NHS Scotland shows the range of hospital appointments that have been missed including:

- Appointments across a range of specialists including physiotherapy, dental, orthopaedic, endoscopy, cardiology, ophthalmology, neurology, gastroenterology, pain clinic, burns unit, audiology, endocrine, dermatology, neuropsychology, musculoskeletal services and ear nose and throat assessment clinics.
  - MRI, CT, radiology, and x-rays investigations
  - Appointments that have required the patient to fast or take bowel prep the day before.<sup>9</sup>
106. During evidence, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland stated that one of their key areas of concern was—
- “...the performance of the prisoner transport provider, I have to say that over my tenure—that is, since 2018—there have been fluctuations in that respect, with what are, in my opinion, unacceptable drops in performance leading to human rights breaches.”<sup>7</sup>
107. In correspondence from HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland (HMIPS) to SPS, provided to the Committee by HMIPS, ongoing concerns relating to prisoner transport are set out. The correspondence also sought assurances that contingencies were in place to ensure that “failures in the transport arrangements do not impact on the delivery of healthcare and that those affected do not lose their place in waiting lists”<sup>14</sup>. The letter also stated that—
- “In Scotland, the principle of equivalence is also applied to prison healthcare to reflect the equivalence to healthcare in the community. Providing for the health needs of people in custody is core to a human rights approach to custody.”<sup>14</sup>
108. In written evidence to the Committee, the Chief Executive of NHS Scotland confirmed that they had written to NHS Boards and Medical Directors to reiterate the request that any prisoners that miss appointments as a result of transportation issues are not removed from or re-prioritised on waiting lists.
109. The section 22 report also highlights that there have been instances where those in custody have missed community leave days which can—
- “...result in delays to prisoners moving on to the next stage of their sentence if they are unable to demonstrate key requirements at parole hearings.”<sup>1</sup>
110. The report further states that “there are several risks associated with the contract if the supplier fails to deliver the required levels of service<sup>1</sup>”. For example, in addition to the deferral of hospital appointments, it highlights that there have been delays in providing prisoners with special escorted leave for rehabilitation purposes.
111. During oral evidence, Audit Scotland highlighted that there are employment and training opportunities, including college courses available in prisons. However, it was explained that these opportunities are limited, and that any increase in the prison population will increase the demand for these opportunities meaning—



- ” That will therefore have an impact on prisoners’ ability either to demonstrate core skills so that they can move on to the next stage of their sentence or to demonstrate that they are ready for release.<sup>5</sup>
112. Police Scotland’s written submission provided an example of where GEOAmeys were unable to uplift the prisoner back to their establishment within the contracted one hour of receiving a phone call to confirm the VIPER appointment had concluded, impacting on the prisoner’s mental health. The submission states—
- ” In May 2023, an HMP prisoner was delivered on time for a VIPER appointment which concluded at 1650 hours. GeoAmeys were advised to uplift the prisoner. GeoAmeys did not arrive until 1944 hours, during which the prisoner had become increasingly agitated due to remaining in Police Custody for an extended period.<sup>13</sup>
113. In its written submission, POA Scotland warned that the impact of prison officers stepping in to cover prisoner escort work in place of GEOAmeys led to prisons being understaffed. To ensure the health and safety of its members, POA Scotland had instructed them to “restrict their regimes accordingly”<sup>15</sup>. POA Scotland explained that this had consequences on the way staff were able to engage with prisoners and help them address offending behaviours and their out of cell activity time.

114. **The Committee shares the concerns of HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland over the impact of the performance and delivery of the Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting Services contract on the ability of prisoners to access healthcare, and the potential breach of their human rights.**
115. **The Committee also notes the concerns of the Prison Officers’ Association Scotland that the performance and delivery of the Scottish Courts Custody and Prisoner Escorting Services contract can lead to prisons being understaffed and prisoners unable to access employment and rehabilitation activities.**
116. **The Committee asks how the Scottish Government will work with the Scottish Prison Service to address these concerns, and in particular, how they will give full and proper consideration to human rights in any future contract.**

## Impact on victims and witnesses of crime

117. From the evidence it has received, the Committee recognises that failures in the SCCPES contract are also having an impact on victims and witnesses of crime. During oral evidence, the Scottish Government’s Director-General Education and Justice acknowledged these impacts, stating the—

” unacceptable performance in the previous operation of the prisoner transport contract” impacted not only on individual prisoners but also the wider justice system including victims and witnesses.<sup>6</sup>

118. In its written submission, COPFS highlighted that delays in prisoner transport have led to cases being postponed to a later date, despite victims and witnesses being in attendance at the High Court. It further highlighted that on some occasions the victim or witness have reported that they “no longer wanted to engage with the prosecution process because of these delays, distress and inconvenience”. COPFS added that additional staff resources have then been required to try and re-engage them in the court process. An example provided by COPFS highlights—

” ...2 recent cases in the High Court. In one, there were 16 family members or nearest relatives in attendance for a murder case which was due to call at 9.30 am. The accused was not delivered until approximately 5 pm. This had a significant personal impact upon them. On the same day there were victims and witnesses in a rape case who were in the same situation with the accused in that case being delivered at 5pm.<sup>10</sup>

119. **The Committee is concerned that delays in transporting prisoners to court have impacted on victims and witnesses to the extent that they no longer wish to engage with the prosecution process. The Committee welcomes the additional work undertaken by Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service Staff to support victims and witnesses in these circumstances while recognising that this places additional pressure on staff resources.**

120. **The Committee asks the Scottish Government what steps are being taken to avoid this type of situation occurring, given the need for victims and witnesses to have confidence in the justice process at the most difficult of times.**

## Risk of contract failure

121. The section 22 report states that there are several risks associated with the SCCPES contract failing. These include “the impact on prisoner welfare; the reputational risk to SPS and other justice partners; and the ability to deliver effective services and achieve value for money”<sup>1</sup>.

122. The section 22 report goes on to state that SPS and its partners have worked on contingency planning in the event of contract failure. In their evidence to the Committee, SPS, its MALG partners and GEOAmeY highlight their joint commitment to make the contract work. In written evidence to the Committee GEOAmeY states that it is—

” ...committed to playing our part in the multi-agency solution that is required to deliver these services effectively.<sup>4</sup>

123. However, in contrast HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland told the Committee

that—

” My concern is that that has required considerable effort from the justice partners and further input of cash and, given the history, I have absolutely no confidence that it is sustainable.<sup>7</sup>

124. In its written submission to the Committee, Community Trade Union went further, stating that in its view—

” the Scottish Escort Contract...is a contract that was designed to fail and apply financial penalties at ease.<sup>16</sup>

125. During oral evidence, the Committee asked the Chief Executive of SPS if the SCCPES contract was “designed to fail”. They responded—

” Certainly, from my perspective, I would not support that statement. As I say, the contract was designed and developed and commenced at a time when we had not experienced the pandemic and the changes that that forced on us, right across the justice sector.<sup>6</sup>

126. In response to these concerns, the Scottish Government’s Director-General Education and Justice told the Committee that while he agreed that further monitoring of the contract was necessary—

” I would not agree, however, that the contract is bound not to succeed.<sup>6</sup>

127. In their written response of 7 March 2024 to HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland’s letter of 6 February 2024, which set out ongoing concerns about the contract, the Chief Executive of SPS also confirmed that—

” Contingency planning had taken place throughout 2023 with all Justice partners; Police Scotland, COPFS and SCTS in the event of partial or full contract failure, beyond the ongoing support provided by SPS and Police Scotland.<sup>14</sup>

128. During oral evidence, the AGS Scotland told the Committee that—

” The roles that are provided by prison custody officers can only be replicated by prison officers or the police, and that is the type of scenario planning that they need to think about to ensure the safe operation of the service in the event of termination by either party.<sup>5</sup>

129. When asked during oral evidence, how it would manage prisoner transportation in a scenario where GEOAmev “walked away from the contract because it was making a loss”<sup>6</sup> SPS responded that—

” I imagine that the transitional arrangements would have been significantly expensive.<sup>6</sup>

130. **While the situation with the Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting Services is unsatisfactory, the Committee considers it vital that the Scottish**

**Prison Service and the Scottish Government take all necessary steps to mitigate risks and prevent contract failure. Looking ahead, the contract must be put on a more sustainable footing where all those involved have confidence in its resilience and effective application.**

131. **It is essential that the safe and secure transfer of prisoners is maintained and that any further unnecessary costs to the public purse are avoided. The Committee therefore seeks assurances from the Scottish Government and the Scottish Prison Service that a robust contingency plan is in place in the event of partial or full contract failure.**

## **A safe environment**

132. The SCCPES contract requires GEOAmeY to provide staff to sit in the court docks with accused persons during court hearings.<sup>10</sup> GEOAmeY stated during evidence that it is now operating 38 per cent more High Court and 44 per cent more solemn court cases than it did before the Covid-19 pandemic.
133. In its written submission, COPFS highlighted that the absence of GEOAmeY staff in court can erode the confidence of court users. COPFS also noted in its written submission that there have been instances of persons in custody attempting to escape during court appearances and that COPFS staff have occasionally felt required to become involved in such incidents, including one occasion where the accused person had brought a knife into court.
134. In its written submission, SCTS also expressed a similar concern for the wellbeing of “all staff working in courts, the judiciary and court users such as victims and their supporters, witnesses and their supporters, legal professionals and the accused”<sup>11</sup>
135. In its correspondence to the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs, PCS also raised a concern around the lack of custody staff in courts and how staff are “fearful for their own safety but also the safety of the wider public and court users”<sup>12</sup>

136. **The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government works with its justice partners, including trade unions to address the serious concerns that have been raised in relation to safety within courts, especially given the reported increase in court cases.**

## **Due diligence**

137. According to the section 22 report, the estimated value of the contract, at the time of award was between £238 million and £250 million over the initial 8-year term. Given the value of the public funds being committed to the contract, the Committee sought

clarity from the SPS on the due diligence that had been carried out in respect of the contract. SPS confirmed that due diligence forms part of the procurement process and had been carried out on GEOAmeY, and at the time the contract was awarded, SPS was satisfied that GEOAmeY could provide the service as required.

138. The Committee was concerned to learn that GEOAmeY's financial reporting covers both its contract in Scotland and its contract with England and Wales, with no separate account for Scotland. SPS confirmed that while GEOAmeY provided an indication of the losses it was incurring under the SCCPES contract, it had to take these figures at face value and "could not do due diligence on any information other than the annual accounts"<sup>6</sup>.

**139. The Committee is extremely concerned that the Scottish Prison Service was unable to carry out due diligence on GEOAmeY's reported financial position in Scotland, prior to committing additional public money to support the contract. We recommend that the Scottish Prison Service and the Scottish Government work with GEOAmeY to produce financial reporting for Scotland to ensure that they are fully informed before taking decisions on future funding.**

**140. The Committee considers that any future contract should allow the Scottish Prison Service to undertake due diligence, using Scotland specific financial information to inform future funding decisions. We recommend that the Scottish Prison Service and the Scottish Government seek professional procurement advice to ensure due diligence in this area going forward.**

## Planning for future contracts

141. The section 22 report confirms that GEOAmeY's initial 8-year contract term<sup>ii</sup> will end in January 2027 and that work by SPS and its MALG partners on retendering the contract is expected to commence in 2024.

142. The Committee sought clarity from SPS on the progress that has been made to date on work for the new contract. SPS confirmed that—

” That work has started. We had a workshop last year with our partners and we intend to hold another workshop. Given the changes that are taking place across justice, a different shape of contract will be required. We have commenced that work, which will take us to the point at which the contract is re-let in 2027.<sup>6</sup>

143. The Committee also sought clarity on whether consideration had been given to a public sector model as part of the planning for the next contract. The Chief Executive of SPS confirmed that—

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ii The contract is able to be extended for a further 4-year period.

” A public sector option will be part of our considerations because we need to see where we will get best value for money, given the significant change in the contract as we move forward.<sup>6</sup>

144. The written submissions the Committee has received, in particular from MALG partners, highlight issues for consideration or inclusion in the next contract. For example, SCTS suggests that the introduction of fully virtual custody courts and prison to court video links for all procedural hearings where the accused is not pleading guilty should be reflected in the contract. The use of technology to reduce the impact felt when prisoners leave custody to attend court was also suggested by POA Scotland. Additionally, COPFS suggested that it may be helpful to include clarity on the role of the service provider in court.

145. One suggestion from HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland is that services should be trauma informed and that—

” I would argue that things such as funeral escorts and hospital escorts would be more trauma informed if they were managed by the Prison Service staff, because the prisoners know those staff and may have a relationship with them.  
7

146. During oral evidence, the AGS stated that SPS and wider justice partners will need to fundamentally think through what is required of the contract and what variation arrangements exist within it. The AGS added—

” There must be a balance between the effective performance operation of a contract, value for money for public spending and the safety and security of prisoner transport.<sup>5</sup>

147. The Committee also heard from Audit Scotland who stated that as Scottish Government policies make a big impact on prisoner numbers, which in turn impacts on the level of supporting services required, then it would expect the Scottish Government to be involved in any future discussions.<sup>5</sup>

148. When asked if he would be in a position to monitor the contract and the bidding process going forward, the AGS also confirmed to the Committee that—

” Yes, I am absolutely delighted to confirm that that is our plan. Given how central the contract is to the effective operation of the Scottish Prison Service and the justice system more widely, that will remain part of our work.<sup>5</sup>

149. The AGS concludes his section 22 report by stating that—

” The issues raised in my report are of significant concern, not only to SPS but to the wider justice sector. It will be important for SPS and their partners, SCTS, COPFS and Police Scotland to work together with support from the Scottish Government, to consider all options available to ensure the safe and effective delivery of prisoner escorting services both now and in the future.<sup>1</sup>

## HMIPS review

150. During her oral evidence session, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland confirmed that she is undertaking a thematic review of prisoner transport which is anticipated to be published in June 2024.

151. **In recognition of the significant issues that have arisen during the current contract, the Committee is firmly of the view that lessons must be learned. We therefore recommend that the Scottish Government and the Scottish Prison Service conducts a “lessons learned” review to inform any future contract.**

152. **The Committee is encouraged that initial work to plan for any future contract, including consideration of a public sector option, has already begun and welcomes the assurances provided by the Auditor General for Scotland that he will continue to monitor the progress of this work going forward.**

153. **The Committee believes that there would be merit in undertaking a value for money assessment of the current contract once it has ended. We therefore ask the Auditor General for Scotland to give consideration to this suggestion as part of his future work programme.**

154. **The Committee notes the significant impact GEOAmeys rates of pay have had on its ability to recruit and retain staff to safely deliver the Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting Services contract. The Committee recommends that the procurement exercise for any future contract gives consideration to the recruitment and retention of staff, including the importance of competitive pay rates that reflect the demands and requirements of the role.**

155. **The Committee welcomes HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland’s plans to undertake a thematic review of prisoner transport. We recommend that the findings of this review are used to inform consideration of the options for any future contract.**



# Scotland's prisons

156. The section 22 report also raised concerns about the size and complexity of the prison population and the overall condition of the prison estate.

## Prison population

### Changing demographics

157. As highlighted earlier in this report, Scotland's prison population is increasing and becoming more complex. For example, during evidence, the Committee heard that the increasing numbers of older prisoners has resulted in an increase in social care needs and that there is an increase in those entering custody who have chronic physical and mental health conditions.

158. The section 22 report states that prisoners with a history of sexual offending and those with links to serious and organised crime present additional challenges in how they are segregated within the prison system. During oral evidence, the Chief Executive of SPS told the Committee that—

” ...having a population that is now made up of a higher amount of serious organised crime gangs and people with increased social care needs and changing risk profiles has marginalised meaningful work and opportunities to build relationships within our prisons... our focus has turned to ensuring that we keep people safe and that we meet their basic needs. <sup>6</sup>

### Impact of increasing prisoner numbers

159. The section 22 report states that the target operating capacity of the prison estate is 8,007 and that SPS advised in November 2023 that the extended operation capacity that could be accommodated by the prison estate is 8,475. As stated earlier in this report, as of 30 April 2024 the prison population was sitting at 8,246. During a statement to Parliament on 16 May 2024, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs confirmed the prison population had increased to 8,348. <sup>17</sup>

160. The Scottish Government's Director-General Education and Justice acknowledged during oral evidence that the current prison population level is a “significant risk” <sup>6</sup> to human rights stating—

” Human rights is an issue that we constantly need to be watchful of within our prisons, and not just in relation to the population level, although the population level makes it harder for us to ensure that we meet the standards that we expect to meet. I agree that the population is a risk. I do not want to speculate about the level of that risk, but we agree that there are specific risks related to the prison population. <sup>6</sup>

161. The Committee asked the Scottish Government and SPS whether legal advice had been sought in respect of the risk to human rights posed by the increased prison



population. The Director-General Education and Justice stated—

” I do not wish to comment on whether or not there is any specific action. I am not aware of any specific legal action around those issues. Obviously, we would get legal advice on any legal action. <sup>6</sup>

162. Given the Director-General Education and Justice’s earlier acknowledgement that the prison population was a significant risk to human rights, the Committee sought further clarity on whether legal advice had been sought on the possibility of legal action being taken. The Director-General Education and Justice responded—

” We do not tend to have hypothetical chats with our lawyers. We constantly monitor the situation. <sup>6</sup>

163. The Committee also asked the SPS during oral evidence whether it had obtained legal advice on the possibility of legal action being taken. The Chief Executive of SPS told the Committee that it operates a risk matrix across all of its prisons, which includes the consideration of how legal obligations are being met. They further stated—

” We now have seven establishments indicating that they are at red status. That does not yet mean that we are not meeting our legal obligations, but a sustained period of such a high level of overpopulation will certainly get us there far more quickly than I had anticipated prior to April’s spike. <sup>6</sup>

164. The Scottish Government’s Director-General Education and Justice went on to acknowledge that the growth in Scotland’s prison population is a “matter of very serious concern”. <sup>6</sup> The Director-General further stated

” Today, we have far fewer people being sent to prison—either sentenced or on remand—each year than was the case in the past. However, the people who are sent to prison are, in general, there for longer and, as Teresa [Medhurst] said, they have more complex needs, which is placing unacceptable pressures on our prisons. <sup>6</sup>

165. During oral evidence, the Chief Executive of SPS expressed concern that seven of Scotland’s prisons, including HMPs Edinburgh, Barlinnie, Grampian, Glenochil, Kilmarnock, Low Moss and Perth are at “red status”. The Chief Executive went on to explain what this means—

” ...those prisons are signalling that acute and critical demands are being placed on them, but they are still managing and have not tipped over from red. If any factors changed—if demand increased or if there was degradation in the staff profile because of leavers or sick absence—conditions would deteriorate very quickly, and we would not be able to cope with the demands that are being placed on us. <sup>6</sup>

166. The Committee asked if the status could get any worse than red and the Chief Executive responded—

” It does not get worse than red. The prisons are telling us that they are on the brink—yes.<sup>6</sup>

167. When asked to clarify what ‘on the brink’ meant, the Chief Executive responded—

” What we see when we are under extreme pressure—both with population numbers and with complexity—is that we lose legitimacy in our actions. The frustrations that people feel because they do not get access to services start to bubble over and tensions arise because more people are asked to share cells. Spontaneous violence increases. We may experience at some point higher levels of staff sick absence because of the pressures that they face with all the transactional work and the inability to do the rehabilitative support work that they enjoy. That breakdown in the operation of the establishments can develop slowly over time or it can happen quickly, depending on the circumstances. That is why I used the language that I did... There is the potential for concerted indiscipline. There is the potential not just for individuals to protest through violence but for there to be concerted violence. All of that can happen.<sup>6</sup>

168. When asked what action has been taken to alleviate the current situation, the Chief Executive confirmed that a recent decision had been taken to—

” ...bring population management—which is normally managed between establishments across the estate—into headquarters, because the number of spaces across the estate is so marginal.<sup>6</sup>

169. When asked what happens when the prison estate reaches maximum capacity, the Chief Executive of SPS responded—

” We gave a figure of around 8,450 or something like that but, to be honest with you, the state of our prisons at the moment is of significant concern. It is acute. Given that we have two public holidays in May, which tends to be when our population rises, I am concerned that we may achieve that 8,450 far sooner than any of us anticipated.<sup>6</sup>

170. Follow-up written information received from SPS, confirmed that the status of prisons “is monitored on a dynamic basis and that as of 15 May 2024, HMP Perth was no longer considered to be at red status.”<sup>8</sup>

## Overcrowding

171. The Committee heard that the high prison population leads to overcrowding and double occupancy of cells. The section 22 report stated—

” Double cells are used across establishments, including at HMP Perth where HMIPS reported in their May 2023 full inspection report that some shared cells were ‘well below the minimum standard of space’ as prescribed by the Council of Europe Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT).<sup>1</sup>

172. In February 2020, the Session 5 Public Audit and Post-legislative Scrutiny (PAPLS) Committee published a report on its scrutiny of the 2018/19 audit of the Scottish Prison Service. In its report, the PAPLS Committee described the solution of

addressing capacity issues by doubling up prisoners as "a step backwards rather than forwards".<sup>18</sup> In its response to the PAPLS Committee's report in June 2020, the Scottish Government confirmed that 85 per cent of the prison population resided in a single cell, therefore 15 per cent were occupying double cells. In its June 2020 response, the Scottish Government stated—

” Increasing the number of prisoners in each cell or "doubling up" is not the preferred approach of the Scottish Government but has been an operational necessity when managing the significant prison' populations...SPS is actively working to provide single cell accommodation to everyone in our care.<sup>19</sup>

173. The section 22 report highlights that in March 2023, an average of 2,368 prisoners (31.5 per cent) occupied double cells across Scotland's prison estate. The Committee notes that this is an increase of over 50 per cent from the figures provided by the Scottish Government in June 2020.

### Restricted regimes

174. One of the consequences of a high prison population is the need to implement a "restricted regime" which is when—

” a basic regime is implemented that meets legal requirements (for example time in the open air and access to visits) but may not include all additional activities, such as recreation or work, that are provided under normal circumstances.<sup>1</sup>

175. During oral evidence, the Chief Executive of SPS told the Committee that overcrowding and restricted regimes are two of the factors that could contribute to a prison "tipping over", due to the conditions under which prisoners are being held which is not "conducive to rehabilitation or an acceptable regime". They added—

” We are managing to hold people as safely as we can, but not necessarily in the conditions that they should be held in. We are complying with our legislative obligations, but we cannot provide the full range of services that people could or should expect when coming into custody.<sup>6</sup>

176. During evidence, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland told the Committee that there has been an increase in prisoners experiencing mental health issues. The Committee went on to ask the Chief Inspector whether there was a way of determining the extent to which restricted regimes and double bunking were impacting on the mental health of prisoners. They responded by stating that a thematic review in this area would be "very worthwhile"<sup>7</sup>.

### Prisoners on remand

177. The AGS's report on the [Criminal courts backlog](#), highlights that the length of time someone accused of a crime is held on remand has increased since the Covid-19 pandemic. During oral evidence, the Chief Executive of SPS explained that prior to Covid-19, the remand population was around 17 per cent of the overall total population and that it now generally sits between 25 to 26 per cent.

178. The Scottish Government’s Director of Justice confirmed to the Committee during evidence that one of the priority actions in its community justice strategy is to support the use of “robust alternatives to remand”<sup>6</sup>. The Director of Justice further stated that while independent judicial decisions are made on whether to place someone in the community or in prison, electronic monitoring on bail under the Management of Offenders (Scotland) Act 2019 means that an average of 400 people are being monitored on bail. The Committee also heard that a supervised bail incentivisation scheme, where local authorities received an extra £1,600 per individual had led to around 1,100 individuals on bail supervision in 2022/23.

### Scottish Prison Service and Scottish Government action

179. In their Annual Report 2022/23, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland stated that—

” Meeting the complex social care and rehabilitative needs of both accommodation and care of the ageing population as well as determining a clear strategy for SOCG [Serious and Organised Crime Gangs] must go hand in hand with a justice strategy to reduce the population overall.<sup>20</sup>

180. In written evidence to the PAPLS Committee in November 2019, the Scottish Government set out the steps it was taking to reduce the numbers of people entering prison. This included a presumption against short sentences, expansion of supervised bail and updated community payback order guidance.<sup>21</sup>

181. When providing oral evidence on the section 22 report, the Scottish Government’s Director-General Education and Justice stated that—

” Far fewer people are going to prison now for short sentences—over 4,000 fewer people a year are going in. Far fewer people are going into the prison population on remand, too. We have seen an increase in the proportion of people who are convicted getting a community sentence rather than any other sentence.

182. The AGS’s briefing, [Community justice: sustainable alternatives to custody](#), published in July 2021 stated that community justice funding makes up less than five per cent of overall justice funding and that there had been little change in recent years. The Director-General Education and Justice confirmed during oral evidence on the section 22 report, that in the current year Scottish Ministers had agreed an additional £14 million to go into community justice services, an increase of 10 per cent to increase the availability of alternatives to custody.

183. Following its scrutiny of the AGS’s briefing on Community justice: sustainable alternatives to custody, the Committee [drew the Criminal Justice Committee’s attention](#) to some key issues that may benefit from further scrutiny, including a lack of data to assess the effectiveness of community pay back orders and the public perception and confidence in community sentencing.

184. The Scottish Government’s Director of Justice confirmed during oral evidence that following the passing of the Children (Care and Justice) Scotland Bill which will end children being sent to young offender institutions, early discussions with secure

providers are under way. They further clarified that when the seven children under 18 years old are able to move to secure care, potentially 70 spaces will be created at HMP Polmont.

185. The Director-General Education and Justice also confirmed during oral evidence that the Bail and Release from Custody (Scotland) Act 2023 includes a range of measures to strengthen release arrangements to prevent people returning to prison.

186. During evidence, the Chief Executive of SPS confirmed that SPS will also look at capitalising on other spaces across the prison estate, but this depends on staffing. She also confirmed that although SPS is taking on up to 780 recruits this year, if it increases capacity then it will need additional staff.

187. In a statement to Parliament on 27 February 2024, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs stated that—

” ...we are working with justice agencies to develop commencement plans within the next year for the reforms in the Bail and Release from Custody (Scotland) Act 2023, which was passed last year. The provisions in that act are intended to refocus the use of remand so that it is reserved for those who pose a risk to victim and public safety and, in certain circumstances, the delivery of justice. The provisions will also improve planning and support for people who are leaving prison.<sup>22</sup>

188. In a further statement to Parliament on 16 May 2024<sup>23</sup>, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs confirmed that following serious concerns being formally raised by the Chief Executive of the SPS, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland and the Prison Governors Association, the Scottish Government intends to seek Parliamentary consent for the emergency release of prisoners when the provisions of the Bail and Release from Custody (Scotland) Act 2023 come into force on 26 May 2024.

189. The Cabinet Secretary also confirmed that further work is planned to take place over the summer on managing the release of long-term prisoners, and that secondary legislation will be introduced to amend the eligibility criteria for home detention curfew and increase the period of time that individuals can spend on release under licence conditions.

**190. As at 15 May 2024, six of Scotland’s prisons were considered by the Scottish Prison Service to be at ‘red status’ and ‘on the brink’. The Committee is extremely concerned that this presents significant risks for these prisons, including the potential for both individual and concerted violence. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government and Scottish Prison Service takes urgent action to address overcrowding in prisons in both the immediate and longer term.**

**191. Given the evidence heard by the Committee of the acute and critical demands being placed on prisons and the risk conditions could quickly deteriorate further, the Committee seeks clarity on how the Scottish**

**Government and the Scottish Prison Service plan to work together to put in place a safe and sustainable way forward for the prison estate.**

192. **The Committee is concerned that overcrowding has led to a significant increase in double cell occupancy, despite previous assurances by the Scottish Government that this is not its preferred approach. We recommend that the Scottish Government commissions a review to better understand the impact of overcrowding and double cell occupancy on the mental health of prisoners.**

193. **The Committee notes the forthcoming action proposed by the Scottish Government on the emergency early release of prisoners under the Bail and Release from Custody (Scotland) Act 2023 along with the longer-term measures on managing the release of long-term prisoners and changes to home detention regulations. The Committee welcomes the additional funding provided by the Scottish Government to support the availability of alternatives to custody. However, the Committee recommends that the Scottish Government considers what additional action can be taken to address prison overcrowding, given the crisis point the Scottish Prison Service appears to have reached.**

194. **The Committee agrees with HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland that meeting the needs of an increasing and complex prison population must be considered alongside strategies to reduce the overall prison population.**

## Prison estate

### Condition of the estate

195. The section 22 reports states that “significant investment is required to create a fit-for-purpose prison estate”. The report references HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland’s 2022/23 Annual Report, which states—

” the ageing infrastructure and general condition of some of Scotland’s prison buildings are ill-suited to a modern prison system.<sup>1</sup>

196. The section 22 report also refers to the Chief Inspector’s 2022/23 Annual Report which stated that “there are still some antiquated Victorian prisons establishments that breach human rights”<sup>1</sup>. When asked for their view on the Chief Inspector’s concerns, the AGS stated—



” In the current environment, the issues that you raise are a live risk...the chief inspector of prisons—as I recognise that I have mentioned a few times this morning—has drawn attention to the fact that 35 per cent of Scotland’s prison population is in Victorian-era accommodation. That brings additional risks: the presenting issue of human rights but also, downstream, a financial risk to the Scottish Prison Service.

In normal environments, we expect organisations to consider whether they are able to quantify a risk and set out the proximity of the risk in accounting standards: whether that needs to be provided for, how it is being managed on a risk register or, indeed, whether there is a disclosure requirement.<sup>5</sup>

197. In 2020, the previous AGS reported on the condition of HMP Barlinnie in the 2018/19 audit of the Scottish Prison Service which stated as “presenting the biggest risk of failure in the prison system”, with no clear contingency plan for accommodating its prisoners should it fail.
198. The current section 22 report and evidence provided by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland, indicates that little has changed and that HMP Barlinnie is still relied upon for “surge capacity”<sup>1</sup> to accommodate significant rises in the prison population across the prison estate. HMP Barlinnie has a design capacity of 987. As at 13 November 2023, its population was 1,406.
199. HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland’s Annual Report for 2022/23 also states that the “ageing infrastructure and general condition of some of Scotland’s prison buildings are ill-suited to a modern prison system”. This includes HMP Barlinnie, HMP Castle Huntly, HMP Dumfries, HMP Greenock, HMP Inverness and HMP Perth, of which the section 22 report states that combined, these prisons accommodate approximately 35 per cent of Scotland’s current prison population.
200. During evidence, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons made it clear that HMP Greenock is one of the best prisons they have inspected and that “the staff-prisoner relationships are superb, the community relationships are superb, and health is good. I think that there are many aspects of Greenock prison that are wonderful”. However, they state—

” HMP Barlinnie is overcrowded and is at risk of catastrophic failure, and frankly, HMP Greenock should be bulldozed.<sup>7</sup>

## Capital programme

201. The condition of the prison estate, as a result of delays in the capital programme over the previous decade, was highlighted by the PAPLS Committee in its 2020 report on the 2018/19 audit of the Scottish Prison Service. PAPLS Committee concluded that—

” The impact of the delay in the capital programme cannot be overestimated; an overcrowded prison estate inevitably leads to restrictions in access, movement, activity and privacy and, as the existing estate deteriorates and becomes increasingly fragile, there is a greater risk of an incident or event occurring which places both officers and prisoners at risk.<sup>18</sup>

202. During oral evidence, the AGS told the Committee that in respect of his current section 22 report—

” Our audit work is not drawing attention to inappropriate capital spending, but what is being spent is not yet tackling what effectively needs to be a transformative approach that addresses the fact that 35 per cent of Scotland’s prisoners are still residing in Victorian-era accommodation.<sup>5</sup>

203. The latest [Major Capital Projects update from the Scottish Government, received by the Committee in January 2024](#) provided updates on the progress of HMP Highland and HMP Glasgow, the replacements for HMP Inverness and HMP Barlinnie, along with the new national facility for women offenders in Stirling. The update stated that in its 2024-25 budget, the Scottish Government had prioritised £167 million to invest and modernise the prison estate towards the progression of the replacements for HMP Barlinnie and HMP Inverness. It also confirmed the completion of the new national facility for women offenders in Stirling, which began operating in June 2023.

## Impact of the prison estate on prisoners

204. The evidence received by the Committee highlights that some of Scotland’s most fragile prison buildings will be made worse by the demands of an increasing and complex prison population. The section 22 report states that SPS recognises that the condition of the prison estate “will impact on the mental and physical health of prisoners, making rehabilitation challenging”.<sup>1</sup>

205. For example, the section 22 report states that some of the shared cells at HMP Barlinnie and HMP Perth failed to meet the minimum standard of space as prescribed by the Council of Europe Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT). HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland stated during oral evidence that—

” ...the reality is that an ancient Victorian prison that is crumbling at the seams and which requires millions to keep the plumbing going is not designed for an elderly population, and that is what we now have. We have a considerable proportion of people who are disabled, people who are physically aged, people who struggle, people who need adapted cells and so on.<sup>7</sup>

## Future improvements

206. The Committee heard several suggestions on how future improvements could be made to Scotland’s prison estate.



207. During oral evidence, the AGS commented on earlier news coverage in which the Governor of HMP Glenochil spoke of the need to consider secure care homes that could meet the social care needs of an ageing prison population. The Committee sought the views of HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland on this suggestion and on whether elderly and infirm prisoners who are of limited risk to society due to their deteriorating health, should remain in prison. The Chief Inspector responded—

” We need to be secure, and victims need to know that they are held securely, but we need to rethink our penal estate.... There are some people who I would not consider to be a risk to society—some of the very elderly disabled prisoners, for instance. However, that does not alter the fact that they will require care wherever they are, whether in the community or in prison. It is questionable whether very expensive and very secure buildings are the right places to hold them. That is a difficult issue.

208. Audit Scotland also told the Committee that in some cases, the health and social care needs of prisoners will be met jointly by prison officers and by specialists brought in by SPS. For example, HMP Glenochil has on site medical and dental facilities which reduces the need for prisoner transport.

209. During evidence, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland highlighted that the newly built HMP Stirling does not have cells with doors sufficiently wide enough for a bariatric wheelchair. The Committee also heard from the Chief Inspector about the Ravenhall Prison Project in Australia, where the prison was designed flexibly to allow future changes to cater for prisoners with different needs.<sup>7</sup>

**210. The Committee is extremely concerned at the continued deterioration of significant parts of the prison estate since its predecessor committee published its report in 2020. We ask that the Scottish Government urgently sets out a clear timetable for addressing those parts of the prison estate that are no longer fit for purpose.**

**211. The Committee shares the concerns of the Auditor General for Scotland that human rights issues present a live risk for the Scottish Government and the Scottish Prison Service, as well as a future financial risk. We recommend that the Scottish Government and the Scottish Prison Service urgently conduct a review to ensure human rights are not being breached as a result of the concerns raised in the section 22 report and highlighted to the Committee during oral evidence.**

# Annexe: Extracts of minutes

Extracts from the meeting minutes of the Public Audit Committee.

## 4th Meeting, Thursday 1 February 2024

### 2. The 2022/23 audit of the Scottish Prison Service

The Committee took evidence from—

Stephen Boyle, Auditor General for Scotland; Michael Oliphant, Audit Director and Tommy Yule, Senior Audit Manager, Audit Scotland.

### 3. The 2022/23 audit of the Scottish Prison Service (In Private):

The Committee considered the evidence heard at agenda item 2 and took further evidence from—

Stephen Boyle, Auditor General for Scotland; Michael Oliphant, Audit Director and Tommy Yule, Senior Audit Manager, Audit Scotland.

The Committee considered the evidence heard at agenda items 2 and 3 and agreed to invite HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, HM Inspectorate for Prisons in Scotland to give oral evidence at a future meeting.

The Committee also agreed to write to Police Scotland, Scottish Courts and Tribunals Services, Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service and NHS Scotland on issues raised during the meeting.

## 9th Meeting, Thursday 14 March 2024

### 2. The 2022/23 audit of the Scottish Prison Service

The Committee took evidence from—

Wendy Sinclair-Gieben, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland, HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland.

The Committee agreed to invite the Scottish Prison Service and the Scottish Government to give oral evidence at a future meeting.

## 11th Meeting, Thursday 28 March 2024

### 3. The 2022/23 audit of the Scottish Prison Service

The Committee took evidence from—

David Jones, Managing Director, James Huntley, Commercial and Finance Director and Gavin Redmond, Accounts Director SCCPES (Scottish Court Custody and Prison Escorting Service), GEOAmev Limited.

The Committee agreed to write to the Prison Officers Association Scotland, Public and Commercial Services Union and Community Trade Union. The Committee also agreed to draft a report on the 2022/23 audit of the Scottish Prison Service.

## 12th Meeting, Thursday 18 April 2024

### 4. The 2022/23 audit of the Scottish Prison Service (In Private)

The Committee considered the evidence heard on 14 March and 28 March 2024 and took further evidence from— Stephen Boyle, Auditor General for Scotland; Michael Oliphant, Audit Director and Tommy Yule, Senior Audit Manager, Audit Scotland.

### 6. The 2022/23 audit of the Scottish Prison Service (In Private)

The Committee considered the evidence heard at agenda item 4.

## 14th Meeting, Thursday 2 May 2024

### 2. The 2022/23 audit of the Scottish Prison Service

The Committee took evidence from—

Neil Rennick, Director-General Education and Justice and Catriona Dalrymple, Director of Justice, Scottish Government; Teresa Medhurst, Chief Executive, Gerry O'Donnell, Director of Finance and Allister Purdie, Interim Director of Operations, Scottish Prison Service.

### 3. The 2022/23 audit of the Scottish Prison Service (In Private)

The Committee considered the evidence heard at agenda item 2 and took further evidence from—

Stephen Boyle, Auditor General for Scotland; Michael Oliphant, Audit Director and Tommy Yule, Senior Audit Manager, Audit Scotland.

### 4. The 2022/23 audit of the Scottish Prison Service (In Private):

The Committee considered the evidence heard at agenda items 2 and 3 and agreed the key issues to be included in its draft report.

## 16th Meeting, Thursday 16 May 2024

### 1. The 2022/23 audit of the Scottish Prison Service (In Private)

The Committee considered a draft report and agreed to consider a revised draft by correspondence.

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- [3] Scottish Parliament. (2024, March 28). Official Report of the Public Audit Committee. Retrieved from <https://www.parliament.scot/api/sitecore/CustomMedia/OfficialReport?meetingId=15797>
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- [5] Scottish Parliament. (2024, February 1). Official Report of the Public Audit Committee. Retrieved from <https://www.parliament.scot/api/sitecore/CustomMedia/OfficialReport?meetingId=15691>
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- [12] Public and Commercial Services Union. (2023, December 14). Correspondence to the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs. Retrieved from <https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/committees/public-audit-committee/correspondence/2024/scottish-prison-service-pcs-letter-to-cab-sec-for-justice-14-december-2023.pdf>

- [13] Police Scotland. (2024, March 13). Written Submission. Retrieved from <https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/committees/public-audit-committee/correspondence/2024/sps-police-scotland-to-pac-13-march-2024.pdf>
- [14] HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland. (2024, April 3). Written Submission. Retrieved from <https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/committees/public-audit-committee/correspondence/2024/sps-hmcips-to-sps-3-april-2024.pdf>
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