



POA SCOTLAND
The Professional Trades Union for Prison,
Correctional & Secure Psychiatric Workers
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REF:GEN/03/24

18 April 2024

Public Audit Committee
Room T3 60
The Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP

Dear Sirs

RE 2022/23 AUDIT OF THE SCOTTISH PRISON SERVICE

Please find below the written evidence from the Prison Officers' Association Scotland in response to the issues raised in the section 22 report.

Should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully
On Behalf of POA Scotland

JOHN CAIRNEY
Chair

2022/23 AUDIT OF THE SCOTTISH PRISON SERVICE
POA Scotland written evidence

The current position needs to be addressed; we are still seeing examples of GEOAmey being unable to fulfil aspects of their contract which is having a direct impact on SPS staff. SPS staff are required to carry out escorts for which there is no compliment to do so and the knock-on impact on this is being felt on the ground. As the recognised trade union for prison officers within the SPS we have continually raised the issues that by staff carrying out these escorts are unable to properly engage with prisoners which has a real time impact as it limits the case work our members should be doing with prisoners which has a knock on impact for prisoners trying to address their offending behaviours and progress through their sentences and prepare for release. This impact should not only be an issue for the POA this should be an issue for everyone who has a vested interest in a safer Scotland going forward. GEOAmey must continue to recruit staff and find the way to retain them. 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, this shows the need for them to improve the service provided which will allow for our members to fully carry out their role in working with prisoners.

Whilst statically the issue is improving, the service being provided still falls short of the current contract. As a union, the POAS are vocal that the impact of having to pick up GEOAmey escorts is leaving establishments understaffed and we advise our members to restrict their regimes accordingly in order to improve the H&S of our members, however, and as mentioned above this impacts the way staff should be engaging with prisoners and helping them address their offending behaviours and their out of cell activity time. Officers are not being able to fully engage with prisoners due to the need of picking up GEOAmey escorts.

Going forward the situation needs to improve the SPS, and their partners need to work jointly, see how this issue effects all the agencies, including ending the needless court attendance, and work together to find a solution, this may need to include changes in law however the situation is such, and looking at trends will get progressively worse, that nothing should be taken off the table. There needs to be a smarter way of delivering the escort service, including the use of technology to cut down on the impact felt when a prisoner leaves custody to attend a court case. GEOAmey must deliver the service they are contracted to do and the POAS will continue to challenge contract failings as the impact is always felt by our members.

JOHN CAIRNEY
POA Scotland

18 April 2024