

Criminal Justice Committee
Wednesday 13 November 2024
34th Meeting, 2024 (Session 6)

Prospective Prisoners (Early Release) (Scotland) Bill: written views

Note by the clerk

Introduction

1. Before the summer recess, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs [announced](#) she would be consulting on a bill to look at the procedures for releasing prisoners on a longer-term sentences. This was separate from the emergency early release schemes and was part of a series of measures aimed at addressing the rising prison population in Scotland.
2. The clerks understand that a bill of this nature is due to be introduced soon which will set out provisions to amend the rules relating to the automatic early release of short-term prisoners and grant Scottish Ministers powers to make future changes to automatic early release points for both short and long-term prisoners.
3. On 10 October, both the Cabinet Secretary and the Lord Advocate made [statements](#) in the Chamber on this and related matters.
4. Before the October recess, the Convener wrote to several organisations to seek their views on what might be being proposed and the contents of the statements in the Chamber referred to above.
5. The aim was to enable Members to have access to some written evidence should a bill be introduced. Copies of the submissions received are set out in the **Annex** to this paper. **Members will want to note that the submissions were made on the basis of the statements and were before any bill has been published.**

Prison population

6. The figures for 2023-24 are due to be published in December 2024 so are not currently available. The Scottish Government publishes summary statistics on prisons in their Safer communities and justice statistics monthly reports. The table below shows the prison population in 2024 by month based on these reports.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Prison population	7910	7965	8040	8244	8265	8136	7963	8151	8347

Source: Safer communities and justice statistics monthly reports

7. The Scottish Prison Service produces weekly prison population figures. They show that the population dropped by 4.25% from 8,232 on 21 June to 7,882 on 19 July 2024 as a result of emergency release measures. The population then continued to increase and is currently sitting at 8,253 as of 1 November 2024.

Action

8. Members are invited to refer to the written submissions when any prospective bill on early release of prisoners is introduced and is being scrutinised.

**Clerks to the Committee
November 2023**

Annex: Written submissions on early release of prisoners

[Criminal Justice Voluntary Sector Forum \(286KB, pdf\)](#)

[COSLA \(157KB, pdf\)](#)

[Families Outside \(170KB, pdf\)](#)

[His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland \(140KB, pdf\)](#)

[Police Scotland \(96KB, pdf\)](#)

[Risk Management Authority \(143KB, pdf\)](#)

[Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research academics \(284KB, pdf\)](#)

[Scottish Prison Service \(95KB, pdf\)](#)

[Scottish Sentencing Council \(186KB, pdf\)](#)

[Social Work Scotland \(163KB, pdf\)](#)

[Victim Support Scotland \(190KB, pdf\)](#)

[Wise Group \(152KB, pdf\)](#)