

Justice Committee**Prisoners (Control of Release) (Scotland) Bill****Supplementary written submission from Social Work Scotland**

1. Thank you for providing Social Work Scotland with the opportunity to comment on the letter by Mr Matheson dated 3/2/15 to the Convenor of the Justice Committee regarding the proposal to end the automatic early release of certain categories of prisoners.

2. Social Work Scotland welcomes the guarantee that all long-term offenders i.e. anyone serving a sentence of 4 years or more for any crime, being released from prison will be subject to a minimum penal of compulsory supervision in the community. This partly addresses the concern Social Work Scotland previously expressed that prisoners may not benefit from community supervision and the benefits associated with this supervision in terms of resettlement and desistance. In order for the proposal to deliver better outcomes both in terms of public protection and rehabilitation it is unlikely to be cost neutral and will therefore require a consideration of additional resource to ensure effectiveness. In addition Social Work Scotland recognise both the need and the challenge in utilising custody for those who commit the most serious of crimes and who pose a continuing risk to public safety. It is the case that a proportion of those committing serious crimes will not pose a significant threat to communities post sentence. The information available does not specify the length and how post sentence supervision will be determined; principles such as assessment of ongoing risk and proportionality should feature in determining the period of post custody supervision.

3. Social Work Scotland would see the review of sentencing guidelines as a necessary piece of complimentary work to ensure the policy is effective.

Social Work Scotland
23 February 2015