

Justice Committee

Prisoners (Control of Release) (Scotland) Bill

Written submission from Glasgow Community Justice Authority

Power of Early Release for Community Reintegration

1. The Glasgow Community Justice Authority (CJA) fully supports legislation to provide flexibility for early release of Prisoners to support more effective community reintegration.
2. The current system of liberations poses difficulties both for those being released from custody on a Friday (or Thursday prior to a bank holiday Friday) and for support services in the community. Many services are not resourced to cover weekends/holidays and local partners have identified cases where this has limited access to benefits, accommodation, addiction support etc. during the critical first few days post-liberation.
3. It is recognised that lack of access to appropriate services on release can lead to re-offending. In cases where there is a bank holiday, those due for release on the Holiday are currently released on the immediate prior weekday – causing blockages in the system. Flexible liberation will allow for more co-ordinated planning, ease the burden on community services and improve the prospects of prisoners reintegrated into their communities upon release.
4. Provisions in the Bill around flexible release provide some mitigation to the risk of non-availability of support services and should lessen the risks of those being released from custody re-lapsing into addiction, rough sleeping etc. reducing the risk of re-offending.
5. The Glasgow CJA supports providing the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) with the authority to manage release dates flexibly where this will enhance positive reintegration. SPS already manages assessment of risk to public protection for those released early under Home Detention Curfews, with a view to improving successful community re-integration.
6. Through established partnerships with service providers (in particular, newly established mentoring schemes to support the release of short-term prisoners), SPS are well placed to connect service providers and prisoners to establish robust release plans.
7. The Glasgow CJA would not support overly proscriptive guidance, but proposes flexibility is maintained by the SPS to maximise the potential of the new authority. The CJA would encourage early monitoring and review of the application of the new powers and that this is undertaken within a partnership context.
8. Local research by the Glasgow CJA, in partnership with SPS, has identified key throughcare management issues. In particular, in Glasgow access to accommodation on release remains of critical concern in addressing reoffending

levels. A recent study in HMP Barlinnie (including a survey response from over 1000 prisoners and a 'Café Conversation' exercise with two dozen prisoners) found that while 15% of prisoners entering the prison were homeless on reception, 42% will leave homeless. Managing release and reintegration is part of the local strategy for reducing this percentage, and therefore reducing reoffending levels.

Restriction of Automatic Early Release

9. The Glasgow Community Justice Authority (CJA) has no evidence to submit in relation to provisions within the Bill relating to restriction of automatic early release.

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