

23 February 2024

Richard Leonard
Convener
Public Audit Committee
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Dear Convener

On 1 February 2024, I provided evidence to the Committee on my section 22 report [The 2022/23 audit of the Scottish Prison Service](#). During the meeting, members requested further information on GEOAmeys pay levels which I provide below.

As at July 2023, GEOAmeys starting rate for a Prison Custody Officer (PCO) was £12.50 per hour. As PCO staff work differing hours per week, there is no annual salary equivalent but full-time staff will work for approximately 38.8 hours per week.

As at April 2023, the annual starting rate for a Prison Officer at Scottish Prison Service (SPS) was £26,820, based on a 37-hour working week. As I highlighted during the evidence session, the SPS makes ex-gratia payments to staff working in excess of their contracted weekly hours in order to maintain service levels. This makes comparisons with GEOAmeys pay rates more challenging. In 2022/23, the SPS made ex-gratia payments to staff totalling £6.3 million (an increase of 46 per cent from 2021/22). Sickness absence, an ageing workforce, ill-health departures and failures in the contract performance of GEOAmeys all impact on the level of these payments.

I hope this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Boyle
Auditor General for Scotland