



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Public Audit Committee

Audrey Nicoll MSP
Convener
Criminal Justice Committee
Scottish Parliament
By email

23 September 2024

Dear Audrey

The 2022/23 audit of the Scottish Prison Service

As you will be aware, the Public Audit Committee recently undertook scrutiny of the Auditor General for Scotland's (AGS) section 22 report, [The 2022/23 audit of the Scottish Prison Service](#).

Following oral evidence sessions with the AGS, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland, GEOAmev, the Scottish Government and the Scottish Prison Service, the Committee agreed to publish a report setting out the key issues and concerns arising from its scrutiny. The [Committee's report](#), published on 10 June 2024, can be found on its webpage.

The key issues and concerns in the Committee's report covered a number of significant and wide-ranging issues arising from the delivery of the Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting Services contract, the impact of overcrowding and double cell occupancy on the mental health of prisoners, the prison population and the prison estate.

The Committee has recently received a response to its report from the Scottish Government. In considering this response, the Committee agreed that it would be helpful to draw your attention to the response to help inform the Criminal Justice Committee's future scrutiny in this area. A copy of the [Scottish Government's response](#) can be found in the Annexe to this letter. The Committee also agreed to request that the Scottish Government provides a progress report on some of its key report recommendations by March 2025.

You may also wish note that the Committee recently received correspondence from the AGS highlighting that while the prisons system continues to face considerable risks and challenges, there have been recently observed improvements in the performance of the SCCPES contract and the management of the prison population. As such, the AGS does not intend to prepare a statutory report on the 2023/24 audit of the Scottish Prison Service.

As set out above, the Public Audit Committee will monitor whether improvement continues to be made when it considers the Scottish Government's progress report next year. Once received, this will be drawn to your Committee's attention.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Leonard MSP
Convener

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Email publicaudit.committee@parliament.scot. We welcome calls through Relay UK and in BSL through Contact Scotland BSL.

Annexe: Scottish Government response

Director-General Education & Justice
Àrd-stiùiriche Foghlam agus Ceartais
Neil Rennick



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Richard Leonard
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Your ref: The 2022/23 audit of the Scottish Prison Service

20 August 2024

Dear Mr Leonard,

Thank you for sharing the Public Audit Committee's report on the 2022/23 audit of the Scottish Prison Service. The report comprehensively captures the issues raised in the 2022/23 audit of the Scottish Prison Service, the evidence sessions, as well as the written evidence received. I am grateful to the Committee for their scrutiny and constructive engagement around these issues and for the recommendations that have been made. These recommendations will form part of the continuing work by the Scottish Government, the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) and partners on the issues raised in the report.

The Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting Services contract

The prison escort service provides a vital function in the Justice system and beyond. SPS continue to work collaboratively with GEOAmeY on behalf of justice sector partners to ensure continued improvement of levels of service. As the Committee is aware, the SCCPES contract was reviewed and recalibrated during 2023, to allow for the stabilisation of the service delivery model. Additional funding provided by the Scottish Government has supported increased and improved levels of staff pay. This funding was provided on a strict "pass-through" basis i.e. the impact of the pay rate adjustment being directly passed to the staff.

Our understanding is that GEOAmeY staff numbers are now up, staff attrition rates are down, and there has been a significant reduction in the number of failed, cancelled or late journeys by GEOAmeY to court and hospitals. GEOAmeY reports that non-court services have improved, with planned failures reducing from circa 40% in September 2023 to less than 10% in July 2024 and attendance at hospital appointments have improved from September 2023 at 60% completion to around 93% in July 2024.



SPS and the Multi Agency Liaison Group (MALG) will continue to monitor robustly the performance of the contract to ensure it meets the needs of our justice system. This includes fortnightly meetings with the service, monthly performance meetings and contractual Quarterly Business Reviews, quarterly MALG meetings with wider Justice partners, contractual 'pass-through' meetings every four months, and reviews against the Contractual Improvement Plan (CIP).

The current SCCPES contract comes to an end in January 2027. Work is currently underway led by SPS developing the approach to the new contract. This includes all Justice partners and beyond working together to consider all aspects of Justice delivery in Scotland, with oversight by the Criminal Justice Board of key Justice leaders.

Prison population

*The Vision for Justice in Scotland*¹ set out the Scottish Government's aim to use custody only where there is no alternative. Prison will always be necessary for those who pose a risk of harm to victims and the public, but in many cases it may not be the most effective way to deal with offending behaviour and reduce reoffending.

The sharp rise in the prison population earlier this year, from an already high position and with an increasingly complex cohort of prisoners, created an unprecedented situation. Reducing the prison population through emergency release provided essential respite within prisons, in terms of supporting prison staff, maintaining safe operations, and protecting the health, safety and welfare of prison staff and those held in custody. Under the Emergency Early Release scheme approved by Parliament, a total of 477 prisoners were released early. The impact of this is being assessed, and learning is being shared across the system. This will help inform decision making on, and implementation of, further measures to tackle the prison population.

A range of other actions are being taken forward to support a more sustainable reduction in the prison population. This includes consultation on amending the release process for long-term prisoners and expanding the time that individuals can spend on Home Detention Curfew (HDC). The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs has also announced an independent review of sentencing and penal policy, with a focus on the most effective ways to reduce reoffending and ensure that custody is used at the right time, for the right offenders.

Prison estate

The Scottish Government and SPS fully recognise the need to ensure prison infrastructure is fit for purpose for those that live and work in prisons and that prisons support the rehabilitation of people living there. SPS continue to invest in the prison estate to ensure that it is capable of coping with the demand placed on it.

As Ministers have indicated, the decisions made by the previous UK Government to reduce capital funding in real terms year on year, alongside construction supply chain issues, labour shortages and recent high inflation means that the Scottish Government is having to make

¹ [The Vision for Justice in Scotland 2022 \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)

difficult decisions in terms of prioritisation of infrastructure projects. Replacing HMP Inverness and HMP Barlinnie remain the current prison infrastructure priorities.

Annex A sets out the Scottish Government response to each of the recommendations and I am grateful to colleagues in SPS for their contributions to this response.

Yours sincerely



Neil Rennick
DG Education and Justice

Annex A

Topic	Paragraph	Recommendation	Scottish Government Response
The Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting Services (SCCPES) contract	44	The Committee supports the Auditor General for Scotland's view that there are opportunities to make the contract more efficient. We therefore recommend that the Scottish Prison Service, the wider Justice Multi Agency Liaison Group and GEOAmeY continue to explore these opportunities as a matter of urgency. The Committee also recommends that the Scottish Government engages constructively in these discussions.	SPS continue to work with GEOAmeY on further improvements. Fortnightly meetings with the service, monthly performance meetings and contractual Quarterly Business Reviews, quarterly MALG meetings with wider Justice partners, contractual 'pass-through' meetings every four months, and reviews against the Contractual Improvement Plan (CIP) supports this work. The Criminal Justice Board provides oversight, receiving regular reports and discussion ensuring governance covering all aspects of Justice delivery in Scotland.
The Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting Services (SCCPES) contract	73	The Committee notes the challenges faced by GEOAmeY in recruiting and retaining staff and the significant impact this has had on its ability to safely deliver the Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting Services contract. The Committee recognises that additional "pass through" funding provided to GEOAmeY by the Scottish Prison Service has improved GEOAmeY's ability to retain existing staff and recruit new staff. We recommend that the Scottish Prison Service continues to monitor the impact of this funding to ensure it is satisfied that value for money and improved outcomes are being achieved.	There are indications that the service has improved across the contracted business. Justice Partners are reporting less failures, with less impact on service delivery. Court arrival timescales have improved by over 15% with court returns performance improving by over 20%. A Contractual Improvement Plan for service delivery is in place and performance is increasing in line with increased staffing levels, which is written into recalibrated contract. This is reviewed every four months at contractual 'pass-through' meetings and monthly performance contract meetings.
The Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner	74	The Committee recommends that the Scottish Prison Service and GEOAmeY seek to build on these improvements with a view to	The additional contractual (passthrough) funding was put in place to increase the Prisoner Custody Officer (PCO) pay rates by around

Escorting Services (SCCPES) contract		securing a sustainable and resilient workforce, by working together to identify and implement additional steps to recruit and retain staff while ensuring that pay rates for prison custody officers remain competitive and reflect the demands of the role.	24% from May 2023 to May 2024. As part of the “pass-through” funding arrangement, SPS is covering Initial Training Course (ITC) staff costs for trainees who are not part of the PCO FTE numbers, until graduation. SPS conduct regular review of the market place, reviewing recruitment strategy, numbers and staff deployment to ensure continual improved service delivery across Scotland. There will be ongoing annual wage uplifts in line with Average Wage Earnings.
The Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting Services (SCCPES) contract	75	The Committee acknowledges the steps taken by the Scottish Prison Service to remove financial penalties relating to certain performance failures to support GEOAmey improve key areas of the contract. The Committee recommends that the moratorium on certain financial penalties is reviewed at the earliest opportunity, once GEOAmey’s staffing complement is deemed sufficient to safely deliver the Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting Services contract.	The moratorium on certain service credits which was in place from August 2022 to September 2023 was removed from October 2023, when the recalibration of SCCPES contract agreed. The recalibration of the contract included a reduction in contract service credits value by 50% on average for remainder of contract term. This reduces opportunity for catastrophic financial impact on Service provider.
The Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting Services (SCCPES) contract	77	We consider it essential that prisoners are able to access the healthcare they require in a timely way. While recognising that responsibility and accountability for the provision of healthcare services to prisoners lies with the National Health Service, and therefore ultimately Scottish Ministers, the Committee recommends that GEOAmey’s performance in this area is kept under close review, with the ambition of driving up performance figures closer to 100 per cent	There is currently a contractual Improvement Notice issued on GEOAmey in December 2022, to meet health care appointment targets, but as staffing reduced, so did service delivery but Health care appointments performance have now improved, from September 2023 (lowest point) at 60% to around 95% in July 2024. If required, SPS Contract Management Unit (CMU) Escort Monitors will intervene to ensure that the critical health care



		<p>of all healthcare appointments as soon as possible.</p>	<p>appointments can be delivered and prioritised.</p> <p>SPS is also working closely with NHS colleagues to rearrange appointments where possible. NHS Chief Executive has written to Health Boards asking them not to, where possible, schedule prisoner health care appointments at hospital before 10am, the time when GEOAmeys are most busy with court arrivals.</p> <p>SPS are aware of the implications of the impact on service failure, therefore SPS works with NHS to ensure most critical appointments are carried out by prison officers, if GEOAmeys are unable to. SPS is the lead authority with a duty to get prisoners to healthcare appointments and it is imperative at times that these are carried out. Planning is therefore made before hand, as GEOAmeys give 24 hours notice, if they are unable to carry out contractual service, allowing SPS to plan and utilise staff via Ex Gratia/overtime, and therefore not always affecting regime.</p>
<p>The Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting Services (SCCPES) contract</p>	78	<p>The Committee welcomes the improvement in GEOAmeys performance in delivering bed watch activities and recommends that performance continues to be closely monitored by the Scottish Prison Service. We also suggest that there may be scope to consider further opportunities to recalibrate the contract, based on the improvements made to bed watch performance.</p>	<p>SPS continue to closely monitor bed watch performance. Bed watch service has improved from 67% delivery in August 2023 to nearly 100% in quarter 2 of 2024. This is also due to capping the contractual element that GEOAmeys are required to deliver at levels of 12, 13 or 14 bed watches, dependent on staff numbers as they increase over time. SPS are therefore required to cover all other bed watches which allows for GEOAmeys to deliver more other elements of the</p>



			<p>SCCPES contract, as staff are not deployed covering bed watches. Once they are at full staffing levels circa 670 PCO FTE, best endeavours will be encouraged to maximise bed watches delivered by service provider.</p>
<p>The Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting Services (SCCPES) contract</p>	102	<p>The Committee notes the improvement in GEOAmeys performance in transfers to and from courts and in transferring prisoners to Video Identification Parade Electronic Recording appointments. While it is encouraging to note positive signs of progress, given the disruption felt by the courts and the significant impact on police and prison officers who are taken away from their core duties to backfill capacity issues within GEOAmeys, we recommend that GEOAmeys performance is kept under review by the Scottish Prison Service.</p>	<p>There is currently a contractual Improvement Notice on GEOAmeys to meet ViPER appointment targets, which was issued in February 2023. Monthly monitoring of performance is undertaken and there is potential for intervention from SPS CMU Escort Monitors when required to escalate level of failure.</p> <p>Trial of ViPER suites within SPS locations are ongoing – currently HMP Low Moss has one – to ensure that there is reduced requirement for GEOAmeys to transport to PCUs/ViPER units. Discussions are ongoing to increase number of ViPER units in prisons, therefore reducing requirement for escort activity.</p>
<p>The Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting Services (SCCPES) contract</p>	114 -116	<p>The Committee shares the concerns of HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland over the impact of the performance and delivery of the Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting Services contract on the ability of prisoners to access healthcare, and the potential breach of their human rights. The Committee also notes the concerns of the Prison Officers' Association Scotland that the performance and delivery of the Scottish Courts Custody and Prisoner Escorting Services contract can lead to prisons being</p>	<p>Work is currently underway developing the approach to the new contract at the end of current contract in January 2027. This includes all Justice partners and beyond working together to consider all aspects of Justice delivery in Scotland, with the oversight by the Criminal Justice Board.</p> <p>Contractual areas within the Scottish justice system will have more weighting where it impacts on human rights, e.g. health care, Children's Hearings, distance travelled, and conditions in vehicles etc. Improvements to court scheduling is also being</p>



		<p>understaffed and prisoners unable to access employment and rehabilitation activities. The Committee asks how the Scottish Government will work with the Scottish Prison Service to address these concerns, and in particular, how they will give full and proper consideration to human rights in any future contract.</p>	<p>considered to avoid long waiting times in holding areas.</p>
<p>The Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting Services (SCCPES) contract</p>	<p>119 - 120</p>	<p>The Committee is concerned that delays in transporting prisoners to court have impacted on victims and witnesses to the extent that they no longer wish to engage with the prosecution process. The Committee welcomes the additional work undertaken by Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service Staff to support victims and witnesses in these circumstances while recognising that this places additional pressure on staff resources.</p> <p>The Committee asks the Scottish Government what steps are being taken to avoid this type of situation occurring, given the need for victims and witnesses to have confidence in the justice process at the most difficult of times.</p>	<p>A contractual Improvement Notice was issued to GEOAmev in June 2023, highlighting the failures and requesting immediate improvement in court service and delivery. Since the reported issues, court performance has improved dramatically, with little issues reported. There are now few significant failures within the court service area of the SCCPES contract.</p> <p>GEOAmev recruitment has included specific recruitment for court-based staff, in those areas which were impacted by low staffing levels, in particular Edinburgh Sheriff Court, Glasgow Sheriff Court, and Perth area and Ayrshire courts.</p> <p>There is an agreement with SCTS and Sheriff Principles to increase the use of Virtual Court facilities where possible to reduce the number of individuals requiring to attend court.</p>
<p>The Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting Services</p>	<p>131</p>	<p>It is essential that the safe and secure transfer of prisoners is maintained and that any further unnecessary costs to the public purse are avoided. The Committee therefore seeks assurances from the Scottish Government</p>	<p>SPS and Justice partners have detailed contingency plans in place in the event of contract failure. There are a number of options available to the partners, dependent on the type and severity of failure, however every option would</p>

(SCCPES) contract		and the Scottish Prison Service that a robust contingency plan is in place in the event of partial or full contract failure.	place considerable strain on Justice Partners. The moratorium of service credits was removed from October 2023, with a contractual stepped improvement plan for service delivery, in line with increased staffing levels, which was written into recalibrated contract. This is reviewed every 4 months at contractual “pass-through” meetings.
The Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting Services (SCCPES) contract	136	The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government works with its justice partners, including trade unions to address the serious concerns that have been raised in relation to safety within courts, especially given the reported increase in court cases.	<p>Safety within the courts is a matter within the operational responsibility of the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS) who remain committed to the paramount importance of ensuring the safety of court users and staff.</p> <p>A contractual Improvement Notice was issued to GEOAmeY in June 2023, highlighting the failures and requesting immediate improvement in court service and delivery. Since the reported issues, court performance has improved.</p> <p>Limiting numbers held in custody cells areas has led to more late arrivals at court, but increases safety in those areas for staff and custodies. All custodies and prisoners that come from secure custody are escorted.</p> <p>Agreement was reached with SCTS to reduce PCO staff levels from 2 to 1 for solemn cases, unless the risk assessment process or sheriff requests more staff. This will be reviewed as GEOAmeY staffing levels increase.</p>
The Scottish Courts Custody	139	The Committee is extremely concerned that the Scottish Prison Service was unable to carry out due diligence on	As a private company, GEOAmeY makes decisions on the reporting of their results, in line with legislation.

Prisoner Escorting Services (SCCPES) contract		GEOAmeys reported financial position in Scotland, prior to committing additional public money to support the contract. We recommend that the Scottish Prison Service and the Scottish Government work with GEOAmeys to produce financial reporting for Scotland to ensure that they are fully informed before taking decisions on future funding.	While SPS are clearly aware of the payments made to them, they are unsighted as to the actual costs of running the SCCPES contract. Negotiations are due to take place with GEOAmeys to provide separate financial reports for the SCCPES contract.
The Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting Services (SCCPES) contract	140	The Committee considers that any future contract should allow the Scottish Prison Service to undertake due diligence, using Scotland specific financial information to inform future funding decisions. We recommend that the Scottish Prison Service and the Scottish Government seek professional procurement advice to ensure due diligence in this area going forward.	The financial status of GEOAmeys was reviewed as part of the bid and tender process, with a clear determination of viability to deliver the contract nationwide across Scotland. Any future contracts will continue to encompass professional procurement advice.
The Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting Services (SCCPES) contract	151	In recognition of the significant issues that have arisen during the current contract, the Committee is firmly of the view that lessons must be learned. We therefore recommend that the Scottish Government and the Scottish Prison Service conduct a "lessons learned" review to inform any future contract.	A lessons learned review has commenced on the current SCCPES contract. This is being led by SPS with all criminal justice partners involved in determining what can be used to improve the next tender process. The requirement for financial reporting separately on Scottish escort contract could be made a part of the retendering process for the next contract. SG Government Gateway process will also be utilised for additional governance during the retender process.
The Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting	153	The Committee believes that there would be merit in undertaking a value for money assessment of the current contract once it has ended. We therefore ask the	For Auditor General for Scotland's consideration.

Services (SCCPES) contract		Auditor General for Scotland to give consideration to this suggestion as part of his future work programme.	
The Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting Services (SCCPES) contract	154	The Committee notes the significant impact GEOAmeys rates of pay have had on its ability to recruit and retain staff to safely deliver the Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting Services contract. The Committee recommends that the procurement exercise for any future contract gives consideration to the recruitment and retention of staff, including the importance of competitive pay rates that reflect the demands and requirements of the role.	Consideration is being given to including a link to Scottish Real Living wage in the new contract, as well as a link to increases in Average Wage Earnings throughout life of the contract. Work place sounding needs to continue throughout the entire life of the contract, ensuring an attractive environment for recruitment.
The Scottish Courts Custody Prisoner Escorting Services (SCCPES) contract	155	The Committee welcomes HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland's plans to undertake a thematic review of prisoner transport. We recommend that the findings of this review are used to inform consideration of the options for any future contract.	The Scottish Government welcomes HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland's intention to conduct a thematic review on prisoner transport and its findings, once published, will help inform considerations for future contracts.
Prison population	190	As at 15 May 2024, six of Scotland's prisons were considered by the Scottish Prison Service to be at 'red status' and 'on the brink'. The Committee is extremely concerned that this presents significant risks for these prisons, including the potential for both individual and concerted violence. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government and Scottish Prison Service takes urgent action to address overcrowding in prisons in both the immediate and longer term.	<p>The Emergency Early Release scheme approved by Parliament has delivered an immediate, temporary relief to our prisons, with a total of 477 prisoners being released early.</p> <p>The consultation on amending the release process for long-term prisoners closes 19 August 2024 and work is progressing on expanding the time that individuals can spend released on Home Detention Curfew (HDC). Legislation will be brought forward on these issues in the autumn.</p> <p>The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs has</p>

			<p>announced an independent review of sentencing and penal policy, with a focus on the most effective ways to reduce reoffending and ensure that custody is used at the right time, for the right offenders. Preparatory work is underway to establish the Review, which will be asked to report its findings to Government and Parliament by May 2026 at the latest.</p> <p>Additional investment is being made in community-based interventions, which ensure justice is done and which can be more effective in reducing reoffending and supporting rehabilitation.</p> <p>Provisions have now also commenced requiring the time served on electronically monitored bail to be considered when an offender is sentenced. The impact of this change will be monitored closely.</p>
Prison population	191	Given the evidence heard by the Committee of the acute and critical demands being placed on prisons and the risk conditions could quickly deteriorate further, the Committee seeks clarity on how the Scottish Government and the Scottish Prison Service plan to work together to put in place a safe and sustainable way forward for the prison estate.	<p>SPS is working to maximise the capacity available within the prison estate, creating 138 additional spaces for adult male prisoners at HMP &YOI Polmont, with scope to increase that to 210 when all ‘under eighteens’ are transferred to secure care. In addition, work is underway to create and maximise space at HMP Low Moss and HMP Grampian. This work will help to address challenges around the management of complex cohorts of prisoners, as well as providing some much-needed overall capacity.</p> <p>The Scottish Government and SPS are working across the justice sector and with wider</p>



			public and third sector partners organisations to ensure a coordinated approach is taken to protect the security and good order of prisons and the health, safety and welfare of prisoners and prison staff.
Prison population	192	The Committee is concerned that overcrowding has led to a significant increase in double cell occupancy, despite previous assurances by the Scottish Government that this is not its preferred approach. We recommend that the Scottish Government commissions a review to better understand the impact of overcrowding and double cell occupancy on the mental health of prisoners.	<p>We recognise the need for more systematic and reliable data on the health needs and outcomes for people in prison. That is why we are supporting the development of a Prison Healthcare Surveillance programme being led by Public Health Scotland which will link prisoner registration data with health and wellbeing data.</p> <p>The safe treatment and mental health of all those in custody is a key priority for this Government and the SPS, who care for people with higher levels of risk and vulnerability than the general population as a whole.</p> <p>Everyone who enters custody is assessed by both prison and NHS staff to identify exactly what mental health, social care, substance misuse, and other support is needed. SPS also have peer mentors and listeners, trained by the Samaritans, to support people when they first arrive and throughout their time in custody.</p>
Prison population	193	The Committee notes the forthcoming action proposed by the Scottish Government on the emergency early release of prisoners under the Bail and Release from Custody (Scotland) Act 2023 along with the longer-term measures on managing the release of long-term prisoners and changes to home detention regulations. The	The Scottish Government's wider policy is very clear: the shift from custody to justice in the community needs to continue, increasing effective community sentences, reducing short prison sentences (which we know are less effective at addressing offending behaviour, with negative impacts on

		<p>Committee welcomes the additional funding provided by the Scottish Government to support the availability of alternatives to custody. However, the Committee recommends that the Scottish Government considers what additional action can be taken to address prison overcrowding, given the crisis point the Scottish Prison Service appears to have been reached.</p>	<p>employment, housing and family connections).</p> <p>Achieving a sustainable prison population in the long-term requires a whole-system response, with every part of the justice system playing its part. Action across the criminal justice system in Scotland will be required, including Police Scotland, the Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service (SCTS), COPFS, SPS, Criminal Justice Social Work (CJSW) and NHS Scotland.</p> <p>Academics, civil society and parliamentarians have proposed a wide range of medium and long term measures, including specialist secure health and social care provision, and alternative bail and remand accommodation. All of these suggestions must be carefully assessed and, where appropriate, consulted on in due course.</p>
Prison population	194	<p>The Committee agrees with HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland that meeting the needs of an increasing and complex prison population must be considered alongside strategies to reduce the overall prison population.</p>	<p>The range of competing and complex demands caused within and across the population presents a significant challenge for SPS. That is driven by the prevalence of Serious and Organised Crime Groups (SOCG), increased social care needs, mental health needs and changing risk profiles. SPS, NHS, education and third sector partners have felt an impact on their service delivery as the focus has turned to ensuring they keep people safe and meet their basic needs.</p> <p>SPS continue to invest to ensure it is in the best possible position to meet the demands they face whilst they continue</p>



			to operate in an unique and complex operating environment.
Prison Estate	210	The Committee is extremely concerned at the continued deterioration of significant parts of the prison estate since its predecessor committee published its report in 2020. We ask that the Scottish Government urgently sets out a clear timetable for addressing those parts of the prison estate that are no longer fit for purpose.	<p>The Scottish Government and SPS fully recognise the need to ensure prison infrastructure is fit for purpose for those that live and work in prisons and supports the rehabilitation of people living there. SPS continue to invest in the prison estate to ensure that it is capable of coping with the demand placed on it.</p> <p>The decisions made by the UK Government to reduce capital funding in real terms year on year, alongside construction supply chain issues, labour shortages and recent high inflation means that the Scottish Government is having to make difficult decisions in terms of prioritisation of infrastructure projects. Replacing HMP Inverness and HMP Barlinnie remain the current prison infrastructure priorities.</p>
Prison Estate	211	The Committee shares the concerns of the Auditor General for Scotland that human rights issues present a live risk for the Scottish Government and the Scottish Prison Service, as well as a future financial risk. We recommend that the Scottish Government and the Scottish Prison Service urgently conduct a review to ensure human rights are not being breached as a result of the concerns raised in the section 22 report and highlighted to the Committee during oral evidence.	<p>We are committed to ensure that human rights of people in our prisons are respected, protected, and fulfilled. The estate remains stable but monitoring the impact of high prisoner numbers on establishments, staff, those in SPS' care and available regime particularly, remains ongoing.</p> <p>SPS are actively managing risks on a daily basis. This includes a range of assessments across the estate, including staffing levels, complexity and sheer volume of population, available space, cells out of use, stakeholder availability (i.e., NHS and Social Work),</p>

			complex regimes due to the complexities of managing differing demographics and logistical challenges associated with an increase in movement.
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