

# Response ID ANON-EZDD-3XHV-G

Submitted to Long-term prisoner release process: consultation

Submitted on 2024-08-16 12:49:43

## Questions

1 Please share any views you have on the general proposal that the point of release on non-parole licence for long-term prisoners should be at an earlier point.

Please share any views you have in the box below:

This response is being submitted on behalf of the Community Justice Glasgow Partnership CJGP of which Glasgow City Council is a primary partner - as laid out in the Community Justice (Scotland) Act 2016. Views are submitted as a collation of views submitted by partners on this matter and by more recent involvement in the process of Emergency Early Release from prison completed in July for the short-term prison population.

The CJGP works towards influencing the national conversation on changes in the justice system. That focus is on upstream, earlier intervention and prevention and alternatives to short-term custodial sentences that focus on tackling the underlying drivers of offending behaviour as the primary means by which to reduce the prison population. To step away from imprisonment as the primary prosecution method for those less serious offenders and towards Community disposal as a primary focus to reduce imprisonment sentencing for the individual as a more positive outcome for the individual but also decreasing the necessity and cost associated with imprisonment.

During the early release process in 2024, a relatively small number (57) individuals were released back into Glasgow City from a 4-week period. This total would have a minimal response to the likes of Barlinnie Prison whose population is often oversubscribed by several factors of that small number.

In response to that emergency, the Community Justice Partnership, was able to utilise the partnership working to be able to prepare for the release of prisoners and react to that challenge. However, this was an emergency response at that time and the larger factor is how we move away from emergency response towards systemic change that focusses on rehabilitation in the Community where the risk of harm to the public allows.

By far the greatest population in prison now, are those who have been remanded and those serving a short sentence. Our view is that the focus and resources should be targeted towards stemming the flow inwards (where the risk of re-offending is lower) rather than on the exit pipeline. Robust diversionary or community-based sentencing already a significant focus of Community Justice Partnership work across Scotland. If the Scottish Government wishes to lower the level of those in Prison, Community Payback Orders, Diversion from Prosecution and Drug Treatment and Testing Orders have long been promoted by partners in the CJGP for many years and the messaging to Sheriffs of the benefits of these options as opposed to a custodial sentencing, would have a more beneficial effect to individuals and the families affected by imprisonment of an individual, where clear evidence shows the those offered alternatives are less likely to reoffend and further clog the already bloated prison population.

A reduction of individuals input to the prison system would be immediate if the presumption against short sentences methodology was more readily adopted by the court system.

2 Please share any views you have on the general proposal that the point of release on non-parole licence should be proportionate to sentence length (as opposed to a fixed point).

Please share any views you have in the box below:

The response by Glasgow Health & Social Care Partnership (HSCP) will cover this in more detail, as long-term prisoners are a statutory duty of Social Work and not the focus of the Community Justice (Scotland) Act which sets the statutory framework for Community Justice Partnerships.

However, speaking from the experience of Early Release of short term prisoners during the Covid 19 Pandemic 2020, and from the Emergency Early Release of Prisoners in 2024, what worked well was the defined date remaining on the individuals sentence and 2 thirds of a sentence remaining would be clear.

3 Please share any views you have on the specific proposal to release most long-term prisoners on non-parole licence following two thirds of their sentence.

Please share any views you have in the box below:

Releasing long term prisoners has potential to be more problematic than the short-term prison population offered Emergency Early Release this year, very little was made by the press of the process, however, longer term prisoners has the potential to place risk in public confidence in the justice system - due to the nature of the offences that attract such high tariff sentences. By comparison a system of Diversion from Prosecution has clear evidence of public confidence.

Additionally, a high level of untried remanded individuals, who receive little to no support due to their status, has been a persistent issue, leading to higher numbers in Prison, the highest proportion of churn and filling the spaces the Scottish Government wants to free up.

The current arrangement for data sharing utilised over the shorter-term sentence Emergency Early Release programme, used the SHORE standards data sharing agreement to get information to Local Authorities, however an agreement does not exist for these prisoners, the data is a statutory responsibility of the Local Authority however the method of data transfer would need agreement.

4 Would you like to offer any additional views or evidence in relation to these proposals?

Please share any views or evidence you have in the box below:

One item to highlight from that experience in 2020 and 2024 was partner organisation informed individuals of when they would be available for early release prior to the Governor veto, which caused issues for the prison service when individuals expected to be released early. This may be an issue where a defined sentence rather than a specific fixed-point date may be problematic within the prison.

## About you

5 What is your name?

Name:

Richard Hill

6 Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

Organisation

7 What is your organisation?

Organisation:

Glasgow City Council

8 Further information about your organisation's response

Please add any additional context:

9 The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

Publish response only (without name)

10 Do you consent to Scottish Government contacting you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Yes

11 What is your email address?

Email:

richard.hill@glasgow.gov.uk

12 I confirm that I have read the privacy policy and consent to the data I provide being used as set out in the policy.

I consent

## Evaluation

13 Please help us improve our consultations by answering the questions below. (Responses to the evaluation will not be published.)

Matrix 1 - How satisfied were you with this consultation?:

Slightly dissatisfied

Please enter comments here.:

The time frame for the consultation response was tight especially over a summer break period where it is difficult to contact staff to gain a response.

Matrix 1 - How would you rate your satisfaction with using this platform (Citizen Space) to respond to this consultation?:

Very dissatisfied

Please enter comments here.: