

Justice Committee

Prisoners (Control of Release) (Scotland) Bill

Written submission from the Howard League Scotland

Scottish Government's proposed revisions to the Bill

We are grateful for the opportunity to comment on the Scottish Government's proposed revisions to the Prisoners (Control of Release) (Scotland) Bill.

We note that the Scottish Government intends to increase the scope of the Bill to end automatic early release for all prisoners serving sentences of over four years' duration. We also note that the Scottish Government intends to bring forward proposals at Stage 2 to ensure that all prisoners serving sentences of over four years' duration will be subject to a minimum period of compulsory supervision in the community.

We refer members of the Justice Committee to the evidence Howard League Scotland submitted on the Scottish Government's earlier proposals to end automatic early release in May 2014:

http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4_JusticeCommittee/Inquiries/AER7_Howard_League_for_Penal_Reform_in_Scotland.pdf

It seems highly likely that these revised proposals will impact on a larger proportion of the prison population in Scotland than the original proposals. These proposals are therefore at odds with the Scottish Government's aspiration to reduce the size of the prison population.

However, in the absence of further detail beyond that contained in the two page letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Justice to the Justice Committee Convener dated 3 February 2015, it is difficult for us to provide further comment on these proposals. Indeed, it is a matter of concern to us that the Justice Committee is being asked to form a view on these proposals as part of its Stage 1 report without sight of a revised policy memorandum, financial memorandum and explanatory notes on the Bill.

Howard League Scotland
16 February 2015