Justice Committee

Inquiry into purposeful activity in prisons

Written submission from Apex Scotland

Following the evidence session on 5 February 2013 I had a couple of thoughts about stuff which could have been discussed but there was not time.

Firstly there were several comments on the role of education as a purposeful activity and the part played by prison wages in decisions whether to do work or take educational courses. It occurred to me that a sensible approach would be to ensure that both work and education were integrated with day release style approach ensuring that the same wage covered both but individuals still maintained their work and income. This could also bring in work related learning which would mould the educational framework within the prison.

Secondly I was impressed by some work done on the ‘working prison’ down south where the idea of a work based prison where prisoners receive a proper wage for their activity which is then divided into payback to victims/communities, supporting families, prison hotel expenses e.g. board and lodging and themselves has been discussed. This model could help restore dignity as bread winner, reinforce the responsibility for the crime by showing direct loss of money from the wage packet to make restitution, and would contribute to the cost of the prison estate. In addition there would be no suggestion of slave labour and meaningless activity. While I know there are potential difficulties with this concept there is much about it which is attractive from all levels.

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5 February 2013