SUBMISSION FROM THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

During my appearance before the Public Audit Committee yesterday on the Audit Scotland ‘An overview of Scotland’s criminal justice system’ report, I agreed to provide further information on a number of points of detail.

Firstly, I agreed to clarify the exact date on which the Government published overall reconviction statistics, which informs the Scotland Performs national indicator of progress in terms of a 2% reduction in reconviction rates by 2011. This was published on 30 August 2011, between the completion of the final draft of the Audit Scotland report and its publication on 6 September, as indicated by Joe Griffin at the evidence session. They can be viewed on the Scottish Government website at: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/08/29151240/0.

Secondly, Willie Coffey MSP asked about a project supporting women offenders’ rehabilitation in South West Scotland CJA area. I think Mr Coffey was probably referring to the “Women in Focus” project, which was introduced in South West Scotland as a partnership between Barnardo’s and the Criminal Justice Social Work Services that operate across the four local authority areas of the CJA (Dumfries & Galloway and East, North and South Ayrshire). An evaluation of the project, carried out by The Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research earlier this year, can be accessed at the following link for the Committee’s, and in particular the member’s interest: http://www.sccjr.ac.uk/documents/Women%20in%20Focus%20FINAL%20REPORT.pdf

Finally, you enquired about data held on women offenders. We should have been able to confirm that the data you sought is in fact collected at a national level but I held back offering a definitive view on this, as I did not want to mislead the Committee. I apologise for any confusion caused but I can confirm that the Scottish Government publishes annual data on the reconviction rate of women offenders at a national level in Reconviction Rates in Scotland: 2007-08 and 2008-09 Offender Cohorts. As noted above, this was published on 30 August 2011 and can be viewed at the link in paragraph one. This information has been published for the past six years.

The publication mainly shows one year reconviction rates, and additional datasets are published which give more detail on two year rates: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/Datasets/ReconvictOffendDatasets/Q>EditMode/on/ForceUpdate/on.

At the request of the Community Justice Authorities (CJAs), a comprehensive set of tables broken down by CJA and Local Authority area were published on the back of the equivalent reconviction statistical bulletin published in 2009. These can also be accessed via the above link. Updates to these tables were then provided directly to CJAs in subsequent years, but not published on the Scottish Government website due to concerns about the statistical validity of reporting results based on very small sample sizes in many of the breakdowns.

As I said at Committee, we are continually looking to improve performance monitoring in this area. Officials are developing a framework of intermediate outcomes which reflect and measure the impact of those factors that influence reoffending, rather than relying on the reconviction rate alone as a measure of performance. This should also deliver better data in
respect of women offenders at a local level. The draft framework will be ready for consultation in March 2012.

I trust that this information is helpful to the Committee.

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The Scottish Government  
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