Local Government and Communities Committee

Homelessness

Submission from Positive Prison? Positive Futures

Introduction

Positive Prison? Positive Futures is a Scottish voluntary organisation that seeks the recognition of people with convictions as citizens. Our social objectives are a fairer society and safer communities. We contribute to the improvement of Scotland’s justice system to reduce the harms caused by offending and to bring about changes in public opinion to support the integration of people who are, or have been, subject to punishment.

We welcome this opportunity to respond to the invitation from Local Government and Communities Committee of the Scottish Parliament to submit evidence on homelessness. We have contributed to the separate response from the Criminal Justice Voluntary Sector Forum and wish to confirm our support for all it contains.

Our Supplementary Response

We find it unacceptable that it is estimated that approximately 1 in every 3 of the people released from Scottish prisons do not know where they will sleep on their first night after liberation. Given that there are over 12000 liberations at the completion of sentences from Scottish prisons every year this represents an appalling systemic failure. In the great majority of cases the date of liberation is known from the moment sentence is passed in court so it ought to be practical and within the grasp of all involved to make practical arrangements for accommodation in sufficient time prior to liberation.

The lack of accommodation deeply undermines the likelihood that released people can make connections with healthcare and welfare thereby seriously reducing the opportunity of engagement with services and support that might otherwise facilitate rehabilitation. This is at serious odds with the Fairer Scotland Action Plan which outlines actions to help tackle poverty, reduce inequality and build a fairer and more inclusive Scotland. It also increases the probability of reoffending.

Pete White
Chief Executive
Positive Prison? Positive Futures…