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David Linden MSP
Convener
Criminal Justice Committee
The Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP

16 November 2026

Dear Convener

RE: Parliamentary Oversight, Incident Risk Management, and Operational Security (HMP Polmont)

Thank you for your letter of 10 November regarding the incident at HMP & YOI Polmont. This was a serious operational incident which was managed by the Scottish Prison Service in accordance with established procedures. Ministers were informed throughout the incident and received regular updates from SPS as the situation developed and following its resolution.

I recognise the concerns the Committee has raised regarding both the incident itself and the arrangements for informing Parliament about significant operational incidents within the prison estate. SPS has a high degree of operational independence relative to the management of prisons, including the management of operational incidents within prisons. It has not previously been the practice for Ministers to provide parliamentary notification of individual operational incidents. It was on that basis that events were handled at the time.

However, as you are aware I provided a statement to Parliament on 10 November and Scottish Government and SPS officials have begun work on a protocol for notifying the Committee of significant operational incidents within the prison estate.

We recognise the importance of progressing this work quickly and will provide the Committee with an update once proposals have been developed.

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In relation to the Committee's wider questions on the incident itself, including the chronology of events, staff welfare, operational response, risk mitigation measures and contingency arrangements, SPS is working to collate the relevant information. Given the operational and investigative considerations associated with some of this material, including that the matter remains the subject of a police investigation, it may not be possible to share all of that information. We will consider carefully the most appropriate means of providing it to the Committee and when that can happen.

I understand that the Committee has also expressed an interest in meeting with me and the SPS Chief Executive Linda Pollock, and if the Committee would still like to proceed with that, I would be grateful if the Clerk could contact my office to identify suitable dates and arrangements.

NEIL GRAY

Copied to Linda Pollock, Chief Executive, SPS HQ

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