



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Criminal Justice Committee

Linda Pollock
Chief Executive
Scottish Prison Service

26 June 2026

Dear Ms Pollock,

The Committee recognises that you have recently taken up post as Chief Executive of the Scottish Prison Service at a time of significant operational challenge. The Committee also recognises the challenges faced by staff across the prison estate in delivering prison services in demanding circumstances.

At its meeting on 24 June 2026, the Committee took evidence from HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland. Members discussed the importance of ensuring that inspection findings lead to meaningful improvements in practice, rather than simply identifying recurring issues. A link to the Official Report of that meeting can be [found here](#) for ease of reference.

The Committee would therefore welcome information on:

- how SPS tracks implementation of HMIPS recommendations
- whether individual prisons develop action plans following inspections and how progress is monitored
- how learning from inspections is shared across the prison estate
- how SPS evaluates whether improvements have resulted in better outcomes for those in custody
- how SPS gathers and analyses operational data to inform strategic decision making
- what work is underway to improve the quality and accessibility of prison data
- what information SPS routinely collects about people held on remand, how those data are analysed, and how they are used to understand the characteristics, needs and experiences of the remand population

During the Committee's discussion with HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, members also explored the importance of understanding the characteristics and circumstances of those who die in custody in order to inform prevention and improve outcomes.

The Committee would therefore welcome information on:

- what demographic information SPS routinely collects and analyses in relation to deaths in custody, including (where available) age, sex, legal status

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(including whether the person was on remand or serving a sentence) and length of time in custody

- where relevant to the circumstances of the death, what information SPS routinely records and analyses relating to mental ill health, previous self-harm or suicide attempts, and substance use
- whether SPS has identified particular groups who are disproportionately represented among deaths in custody
- where such data are collected, how they are used to inform operational practice, policy development and preventative interventions
- how learning is shared across the prison estate and with partner organisations.

The Committee is also keen to understand whether SPS currently has sufficient operational and performance information to identify risks, evaluate interventions and demonstrate whether operational changes are improving outcomes. In particular, the Committee would welcome information on the key performance and outcome measures considered by the Executive Team; how these are reviewed; what additional information SPS considers necessary but is currently unable to obtain; and how SPS intends to improve the transparency of operational data available to the Parliament and the public.

As you take up your role as Chief Executive, the Committee would also welcome your reflections on your priorities for strengthening the use of evidence and data in decision making across the Scottish Prison Service, improving transparency, and ensuring that learning from inspections and other scrutiny activity is translated into measurable improvements for those living and working in Scotland's prisons.

The Committee looks forward to working constructively with you during Session 7 and would be grateful for your response by Friday 21 August 2026, to inform its consideration of these issues at the beginning of Session 7.

Yours sincerely,

Alyn Smith MSP
Convener
Criminal Justice Committee

