



**OFFICIAL REPORT**  
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# Justice Sub-Committee on Policing

**Thursday 19 April 2018**

**Session 5**



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba



---

**Thursday 19 April 2018**

**CONTENTS**

	<b>Col.</b>
<b>DECISION ON TAKING BUSINESS IN PRIVATE .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CUSTODY .....</b>	<b>2</b>

---

**JUSTICE SUB-COMMITTEE ON POLICING**  
**5<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2018, Session 5**

**CONVENER**

\*John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green)

**DEPUTY CONVENER**

\*Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

\*Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)

\*Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)

\*Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)

\*Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD)

\*Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)

\*attended

**THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:**

Lucille Inglis (Unison Scotland)

Chief Superintendent Garry McEwan (Police Scotland)

Calum Steele (Scottish Police Federation)

**CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE**

Diane Barr

**LOCATION**

The David Livingstone Room (CR6)



## Scottish Parliament

### Justice Sub-Committee on Policing

*Thursday 19 April 2018*

*[The Convener opened the meeting at 13:00]*

### Decision on Taking Business in Private

**The Convener (John Finnie):** Feasgar math, a h-uile duine, agus fàilte. Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the fifth meeting of the Justice Sub-Committee on Policing in 2018. We have no apologies.

Agenda item 1 is a decision on taking business in private. Does the committee agree to take item 3, on the sub-committee's work programme, in private?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

**The Convener:** Thank you very much indeed.

## Custody

13:01

**The Convener:** Agenda item 2 is an evidence session on Police Scotland's custody provision. I refer members to paper 1, which is a note from the clerk, and paper 2, which is a private paper. I welcome Chief Superintendent Garry McEwan of Police Scotland's criminal justice services division.

**Chief Superintendent Garry McEwan (Police Scotland):** Thank you very much.

**The Convener:** I also welcome Calum Steele, the general secretary of the Scottish Police Federation, and Lucille Inglis, chair of the police staff Scotland branch of Unison.

We will move straight to questions. Margaret Mitchell has first question.

**Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con):** Good afternoon, everyone. I thank the witnesses for their written submissions. Looking at them, I see quite a variation in the estimates of the number of vacancies within the custody division. Could I have an assessment from each of you as to how many vacancies you think there are?

**Calum Steele (Scottish Police Federation):** In fairness, any assessment would be different depending on the starting point and how it is measured. Certainly, when I sent a written reply to the convener on 5 March, the position that I laid out was exactly as we understood it. Of course, on the assumption that each of the three representatives in front of the committee has a different starting point, you will get a different answer. Aside from what I laid out in the correspondence that I provided to the convener on 5 March, that is the position as the SPF understands it.

**Margaret Mitchell:** Would you say how many vacancies there are, just for the record?

**Calum Steele:** It was certainly more than the 18 vacancies that have been cited. If you will allow me to remind myself of the correspondence, which I have here, I will come back to you on that.

**Margaret Mitchell:** I think that it might have been 45, although it might have been more.

**Calum Steele:** Yes—45.

**Margaret Mitchell:** Thank you.

**Lucille Inglis (Unison Scotland):** I should say that I am deputising for Michelle McHardy.

I do not have an overall total, but I would say that the numbers in most places are down by one or two, certainly in the smaller areas. There are a lot of vacancies.

**Margaret Mitchell:** You would not have a number that you could—

**Lucille Inglis:** No, I am sorry, I do not. I can certainly get it to you.

**Margaret Mitchell:** Mr McEwan?

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** I am quite clear on the numbers. Calum Steele is right that we are looking at a moment in time—we are looking at post-April 2017. At the time of our submission, in January or February 2018, I think, there were 18 vacancies. Of those 18 vacancies, 12 have now been filled and six are still in the recruitment process. There are two additional vacancies where people have retired. We now have eight vacancies across my custody and criminal justice division. Prior to April 2017, through vacancy management, the force took the decision to delete a number of posts across the organisation that had previously been vacant for a period of time. At that time, 50 posts were deleted from my division.

**Margaret Mitchell:** How many should there be in total?

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** There is no definitive number for how many there should be, because we are always trying to improve and rationalise our estate. As things stand right here and now, there are eight vacancies.

**Margaret Mitchell:** Roughly how many do you have?

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** We have hundreds of staff.

**Margaret Mitchell:** From the SPF submission, I understand that 118 police custody officer vacancies across the country have simply been deleted. Would you like to comment on that?

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** That is the point that I was trying to make. Pre-April 2017, 50 posts were deleted through vacancy management because they had been vacant for a period of time. That was in April 2017, over a year ago.

**Margaret Mitchell:** One hundred and eighteen seems an awful lot. Why would—

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** It was not 118; it was 50.

**Margaret Mitchell:** Would that be your assessment too, Mr Steele?

**Calum Steele:** The position, as articulated in the correspondence, was as we understood it at the time. I appreciate Mr McEwan's careful use of language in calling it vacancy management. It comes down to the reason why the posts were left vacant, which was because there was not the money to fill them. That is probably the

fundamental problem. Those who work in the criminal justice area, particularly in custody but across all areas of the service, are under phenomenal pressure and are working exceptionally hard. I would not expect anyone of Mr McEwan's seniority to come to the sub-committee and say that the police service is underfunding any particular area, but vacancy management is another way of saying that there was no money to recruit the people that were required to undertake the job. I am sure that Lucille Inglis would be able to confirm that.

**Lucille Inglis:** Yes, that is right.

**Margaret Mitchell:** It is quite concerning that we have such variation. Could you outline the process for calculating the number of custody vacancies? You have said, Mr Steele, that it varies, depending on how you do it. What is the official process, Mr McEwan?

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** The force executive took the decision that any vacant posts, or any individuals who left my division, from April 2017 onwards—over a year ago now—would be backfilled, for which we would recruit externally. That is what we have been doing. I am working from a position that has been well established for over a year. As I said, our submission from January or February shows that we had 18 vacancies, but a fair proportion of them have now been filled and we are working towards filling the remainder.

**Margaret Mitchell:** Let us say that 60 police officers are backfilling. Is that a temporary solution, and, in reality, it is equivalent to 60 vacancies?

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** It is a temporary solution. Agreement was reached as I described it on the previous occasion I was before the sub-committee. Previously—and I am going back to when Police Scotland came into existence—there was a moratorium on the recruitment of police custody and security officers because we were going to embark on a period of organisational change. People left the organisation between 2013 and April 2017, but there was a moratorium on recruitment. What we found—and certainly Unison colleagues were the first to voice their concerns about this—is that the backfilling arrangements were very high risk. As I think I described it the last time, on one day, Mr Finnie might come in and be in the role; the next day, it might be Mr Macpherson; and then it might be Mr McArthur. There was no real continuity.

We found that the police staff experts were regularly having to verbally rebrief the cops who came in, advising them of changes in practice. The executive took the decision in November of last year to move 62 police officers into the

structure to enable us to move towards full organisational change. Those permanent 62 officers would provide that continuity, rather than there being a disparate approach. I have certainly seen, as have my staff—we will see what my two colleagues say—that the professional continuity has certainly increased as a consequence.

**Margaret Mitchell:** I think that what you say in your submission and what we have heard today is as clear as mud. To say that it lacks transparency is an understatement. I suggest that, as a result of this meeting, you take my comments back to Police Scotland and see whether we can get a definitive way of establishing what is the optimum number—the ideal number—within certain boundaries, how many we have, how the number is calculated and the effect of backfilling, which is something that we have looked at since the inception of Police Scotland as being detrimental to the delivery of the service.

Perhaps you can elaborate on the impact on demand and service delivery of having 60 officers doing the backfilling.

**Lucille Inglis:** We supported the approach whole-heartedly, because we were limping along, with police officers coming in off the street who were not really fully trained. Rather than assisting the PCSOs, they were a bit of a hindrance, because we were having to teach them and show them things as we went along. Our view was that it would be better for stability for a chunk of officers—the 62 officers—to come in, because they would be permanent until such time as we could fill the posts. However, reorganisation is taking place at the same time, so we are caught up going forward and yet still having shortages here and there. We are hearing of shifts being varied because of that, and of staff being moved because there is not enough resilience and so on. We are in the middle, if you like.

**Margaret Mitchell:** Could you explain what you mean by “reorganisation”?

**Lucille Inglis:** There is going to be a new structure with the hubs, which you questioned Mr McEwan about the last time. We are looking to increase staff numbers and bring staff in. We hope that there will be enough resilience in there, because we should be aiming for self-sufficiency, instead of having to keep taking officers off the street to help us by backfilling. We are left with this legacy of shortages, which we are trying to manage, but we are also trying to go forward as well.

**Margaret Mitchell:** The heart of my question is the impact on front-line policing of 60 officers backfilling. Would either Mr Steele or Mr McEwan like to comment on that?

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** Lucille Inglis talked about the principle of moving forward. I would like to give some high-level indicators of what the force is doing in my criminal justice services division. The policy is that, from April 2017, all vacancies will be filled; that has been going on for a year. We are currently in the process of recruiting 70 new criminal justice PCSO staff, so 70 new people externally are coming into my division; we hope to have 45 of them in place by July of this year. That is a massive investment that the force executive has brought forward.

On capital expenditure, I have been given in excess of £1 million to spend on looking at our estate to find new and innovative ways in which we can reduce the risk to the custodies but which also prevent front-line officers from having to come in. For example, there are the four hubs in Aberdeen, Inverness, Falkirk and London Road that I spoke about when I was last before the sub-committee. We are putting new closed-circuit television into every police cell in those four hubs. At the moment, local police officers have to sit and watch a custody who is perhaps suicidal face-to-face or via one camera, but we will have CCTV in every cell. That will mean fewer local police officers watching more cameras, while keeping more people safe. That is part of the national custody system, and we are the first division to roll out a national system in Police Scotland successfully.

**Margaret Mitchell:** Can I stop you there? My question was about the impact of the backfilling on front-line services.

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** The impact, from my perspective and from that of local commanders, is positive, because what of what was previously happening routinely. As I said, if Mr Finnie was a police officer in group 1 in Aberdeen, he might have been backfilling for a day, but a different officer would be backfilling the next day. The inquiries that such officers were meant to be dealing with out on the front line were being impeded, because they were being brought in to work on custody. That is negated if permanent police officers are brought in—there is no requirement for those officers—

**Margaret Mitchell:** So it is an adverse effect.

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** I think there have been significant benefits, and that is the feedback that I have been getting from local policing.

**Margaret Mitchell:** Is it a positive?

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** It is a positive, yes.

**Margaret Mitchell:** They are being taken out of front-line duty to do custody duty, and that is a positive.

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** Yes, because previously they were taken out on a more ad hoc basis and more of them were being taken out. There are 62 such officers, whereas, over the years—I am talking three or four years ago—the number coming in and backfilling would be well into the hundreds.

**Margaret Mitchell:** Forgive me, but are you saying that it is not as bad as it used to be?

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** It is certainly a lot better, yes.

**Margaret Mitchell:** But there is still an adverse effect.

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** That may be your perspective. I think that during this—

**Margaret Mitchell:** I am asking you.

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** No, I think there have been—

**Margaret Mitchell:** There is no adverse effect whatsoever.

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** I think that there is a real benefit to policing, to the custodies and to continuity.

**Margaret Mitchell:** I would like to hear Mr Steele's comments.

**Calum Steele:** This is perhaps counterintuitive, but it is better that we have had the resilience put into custody rather than face the considerable delays, albeit that there are still occasional delays, that were being experienced when we were coming up against a very underresourced custody area. It is perhaps counterintuitive that the removal of 62 officers to support the custody element has provided an improvement to the service that is experienced by police officers when they get to custody. Of course, self-evidently, the other side of that coin is that there are 62 fewer people out there to deliver the policing service. However, in the round, the fact is that those who utilise the custody service do not experience delays of the same magnitude and the disparate approach that was evident before those 60-odd people were brought in to shore up the capability within custody. That is, counterintuitively, providing a better service. As illogical as it seems—

13:15

**Margaret Mitchell:** I think that you are looking at this as part of front-line duty, but I was talking about people out on the streets dealing with things as they come along and separating that from the process. I understand that there is a connection.

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** May I make a final point? This is an interim solution: the 62 police officers who are on custody duty and who have been there for about nine months will be returned to the front line by November of this year, because we are recruiting the additional criminal justice PCSOs. It is an interim solution to shore up, as Calum Steele described it, the current state of the division until we establish new and innovative ways of working, at which point the officers will be released back to the front line.

**Lucille Inglis:** It is having a negative effect, without a doubt. We now have PCSOs working on their own when there should be two of them. The standard operating procedures say that there should be two of them to go to the cells, two of them to take people for interview and so on. I raised that point recently, and I was told that risk assessments are now happening. We now find that staff are working on their own where there probably would have been two of them before. Just on Saturday, I was at Dalkeith speaking to custody. One chap has moved away to another station—to Livingston, I think—and they had to get somebody to backfill his post at Dalkeith. Of course, that backfill has to come from the street. Margaret Mitchell is right: it is definitely still having a negative effect. Is it better than it was? Yes, but we still have to backfill, and it is still having a negative effect.

**Margaret Mitchell:** That is very helpful.

**The Convener:** Ms Inglis, I am grateful that you mentioned risk assessments. I have a question for Mr McEwan, before Daniel Johnson comes in with a supplementary. People would imagine that the decisions that are made around deployment in the custody area, which is a very important area, would be informed by a lot of issues, such as a workload analysis, a skills profile and a risk assessment, which is the important point that Ms Inglis made. Mr McEwan, are you able to share any of those documents with the committee? Have there been occasions when assessments that say that, as we have heard, two members of staff should do something have not been adhered to?

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** We have a full policy around care and welfare. A lot of the risk assessments that I think Lucille Inglis is talking about are dynamic, so they involve the staff on the ground—

**The Convener:** Sorry, can I interrupt you? Can you explain? I do not like the word "dynamic". My experience of dynamic experience was "make it up as we go along". How dynamic does it become if you have a number of custodies and a reduced number of people looking after them? When does the assessment then get made?



**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** I disagree with you. I think that a dynamic risk assessment is about empowering my staff on the front line. It is really important to empower them to be able to make decisions, rather than rely on what is written in our guidance. We have a minimum set of resourcing principles. This is where it becomes not so much confusing as difficult to put on paper. My resourcing principle is that there should be one member of staff to 10 cells. In some buildings across the country there are up to 50 cells. You can work out the maths, but the reality is that in places such as Galashiels, which has three cells, we obviously do not leave just one member of staff in there; we will leave two. We have a set of resourcing principles, but the important point is that some custodies are very high risk, some are low risk, some are suicidal and some are compliant. It is for the staff on the ground to make a dynamic risk assessment about whether two people are required to work that custody or whether, if he or she is totally compliant, one member of staff could do that. That is what I mean by dynamic risk assessment.

**The Convener:** No one is taking away discretion, but are you saying that, in the police service, relatively junior members of staff are empowered to say, "I am not going to do that. I do not think that it is safe. It does not meet the terms of the risk assessment and people do not have the necessary skills profile"?

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** Absolutely. There are some junior members of staff, but the staff who are doing this have anything from five months' service to 25 years' service, so, yes, I would empower them all to come forward with new ideas, make decisions and use their discretion.

**The Convener:** Are you able to share with us any skills assessment, skills profile and indeed risk assessment regarding custody?

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** I am not clear exactly what you are asking for, but I will happily provide information. There is now a three-week training course for the 70 new members of staff that are coming in. It is very comprehensive. I can give you access to what the training programme is, if that is what you are after.

**The Convener:** Is it now the case that if a police officer came in off the street to assist in custody, it would take a three-week programme to make that safe? Was it safe if they were coming in on an ad hoc basis, just a day here, a day there?

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** I am sorry, you misinterpret me. It is the new criminal justice PCSOs—the new police staff that we are recruiting—who are undertaking a three-week training course. We are trying, with the new hubs that I spoke about, to create an omniscient

job description, in that the custody staff do not just do custody roles, they do case management, police national computer, criminal history system and production. We are building and enhancing their skillset and enabling them to do more than one area of business so that we stop the silo working.

**The Convener:** Were the ad hoc arrangements safe?

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** The ad hoc arrangements currently have been mitigated because of the 62 officers, whom I mentioned earlier, who give that continuity—

**The Convener:** Were the arrangements safe, Mr McEwan?

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** When?

**The Convener:** If you had untrained police officers going into—

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** We do not have untrained police officers. The police officers are trained in custody. I do mean by exception, if there is a set of extenuating circumstances in which we need a police officer in there and there are no trained officers across the local area, then my decision would be to put that police officer in rather than have nobody. But my policy and my guidance is that the officers should be trained. In the main—and I mean 99 per cent of the time—they are.

**Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):** I would like to put a supplementary question to Lucille Inglis and Calum Steele. My understanding that is the 62 police officers have been put in as a medium-term backfill, in lieu of the 70 PCSO staff that are coming in. Lucille Inglis said that the situation at present is better, but still not what it needs to be. Will it be what it needs to be when the 70 PCSOs are trained and in place? I would be interested in your view on that and indeed Calum Steele's.

**Lucille Inglis:** No, not in my opinion. It is good that they do risk assessments, but we do not have crystal balls. You start off in custody and everything could be quiet, so somebody might deem, "We can work with just the one PCSO" but it just needs something to happen, somebody to go off. It is a high-risk area. I would prefer to see more than somebody working on their own. I do not think that that is good practice.

**Calum Steele:** I largely concur with Lucille Inglis. The 62 police officers are in themselves a shortfall of the original request. Certainly, the original indications that came from Assistant Chief Constable Mawson were that he was looking for 100 staff to shore up the capabilities within the unit. The 62, in their own right, are better than none, but not as good as 100. Replacing those 62

with slightly more still does not give you what the original shortfall was perceived to have been.

As I think that everybody recognises, custody is a moving feast. The Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2016, for reasons that we may or may not get on to later, has resulted in a reduction in the number of people coming into custody. I think that some people take the view that there are legitimate reasons for that and that we no longer need to take so many into custody. I know that a significant number of my members believe that it is a bureaucratic nightmare trying to take someone into custody, so that in its own right creates an impediment to people getting in.

Of course, there is the question of how long they have to wait to get back out on the street once they get to the custody facility. We have some examples—they would make your hair curl, those of you who are fortunate to have some—of the kinds of things that have happened when we await entry into the custody facility because of the delay that the criminal justice staff are experiencing because of the obligations of the new act.

**Daniel Johnson:** Just briefly, Ms Inglis, would you concur with that implied shortfall of 30 full-time equivalents?

**Lucille Inglis:** Yes. The idea was for 100 officers to be transferred from local policing.

**Calum Steele:** This is probably a really useful point that Mr Johnson has touched on. It highlights a perception that exists across the police service that, when you need a problem filled, the place you go to fill that problem is what is broadly termed front-line response policing and areas of the police service. I am not saying that those who work in other areas of the police service are not performing gainful jobs or delivering important functions, but the more corporate and support functions and specialised functions are rarely called upon to provide the support to other areas of policing when it is required and it is usually a diminution in what the front-line would deliver. I suppose to some extent, if I may revisit Ms Mitchell's question, had the police service drawn from a greater area of policing to provide those 62 police officers, then the effect on the front-line service would have been greatly diminished, while also enhancing the capabilities within the custody area.

**Daniel Johnson:** May I probe that point? Are you saying that those officers could have been drawn from other areas of policing or that civilian staff could have been retrained and redeployed? Which category of personnel are you talking about?

**Calum Steele:** I would not dare to assume to speak for police staff, members of the police service, not least because there are a huge

number of complexities associated with contractual arrangements that would have been worked through. Police officers are, through good or bad, inherently more flexible resources to deploy, but the police service in general lacks imagination when it comes to looking for resources to move from one place to another.

**Lucille Inglis:** ACC Mawson did ask right across the board, including the specialised squads, but unfortunately resources were lacking, so it fell to local policing. He did ask everybody, across the board, to see whether they could release people.

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** I have been trying to come in to clarify that 62 officers have come from local policing. We now have 10 or 11 from the corporate service division—what would be defined as back-office roles. They absolutely do play a valuable role in training officers and new recruits, and there are 10 or 11 posts coming from them. The staff that work within the corporate services organisational development structures are actively looking for more resource to bring back into my division. It does take a bit of time to achieve that, but we are definitely trying to modernise our approach around keeping as many officers in the front-line and taking staff from other areas to support front-line business, of which custody is certainly one.

**Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP):** We heard previously about the number of prisoners being transferred over long distances due to lack of capacity within the custody estate. Can I ask you to update us on that? Also, could you tell us what assessments are made in order to make sure that vulnerable prisoners are able to undertake such journeys?

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** If you recall, we talked during our last session, on 25 January, about the significant change being the introduction of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2016. At that meeting I gave an indication—albeit without a crystal ball—that I suspected custody numbers would reduce again, because of Lord Carloway's article 5 presumption of liberation, around liberty of people and risk-managing people within communities, rather than keeping them in a 2m by 4m box for two days until they appear at court.

Over the period from 10 weeks before the act came in to 10 weeks after it came in, there has been a further 15 per cent reduction in the number of custodies that are being kept in custody centres across the country. What that means in numbers is that over the 10 weeks after the act came in, 2,600 fewer custodies have come into the custody centres, compared to the 10 weeks before the act came in. I expect, as the act further embeds and officers and staff are aware of the Lord Advocate's

guidelines and the presumption of liberation, that number will reduce.

To put that in perspective, in 2013 there were 202,000 custodies coming into my centres. At April, just a month past 31 March, there were 130,000, so year on year there have been 72,000 fewer custodies. That is why it is important and difficult to keep looking back around numbers and staffing profiles, because we have reduced custodies by 72,000 people. It is absolutely right that, as a leader and with my staff, right from the grass roots, we need to redefine what the custody model looks like, because demand is plummeting. It would be folly for me to have custody centres open across the country with very limited custodies going through them while members of staff are in effect employed there, not being as busy as they could be. That is not really best value and not best use of the public purse, in my view.

**Rona Mackay:** Has that reduced the number of long-distance journeys that were happening? Has it helped capacity?

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** It has. I have a dip sample. I will have to find my particular page around this, if you will bear with me. [*Interruption.*] If you recall, at the previous committee meeting I gave the example of four weekends and I compared 2013 to 2017. The information is from paper records in 2013, and the national custody system now.

13:30

I looked at four weekends—transfers do not happen during the week, but at weekends—and four years ago there were 79 transfers over a weekend, in 2017 there were 17, and in February, for the first weekend, there were five. We went from 79 transfers four years ago to five in that first weekend.

The second weekend there were no transfers; the third weekend there were four transfers; the fourth weekend there were 23 transfers, which sounds quite high. Clearly, I looked into that and that was because of some pre-planned work in Livingston and some unplanned work—there was a flood in another custody centre. Our business continuity dictates that we need to then move custodies about because of estate issues. We have moved, on weekend one, from 79 down to 5 transfers; on weekend 2 there were zero transfers; and on weekend 3 there were four. Transfers are very, very minimal.

Transfers are still required, because somebody might get locked up on a warrant in Glasgow, but the warrant might be for Aberdeen. You cannot realistically expect that individual to spend a day in Glasgow and then be ferried up to Aberdeen two hours before a court appearance. What we do is

try to plan that journey to enable the custody to be transported at the quietest time for us and for local policing, but to make sure that he or she gets there at the appropriate time.

**Rona Mackay:** There is also the issue around enhanced levels of care. Some prisoners were being transferred because there was not the facility or there was not adequate facility for enhanced levels of care where they were. How is that panning out if the custody centres are not adequately equipped? How does that tie in with people who need extra care and vulnerable people? How are they assessed?

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** You are absolutely right. It makes no sense to me to have someone locked up in Wick or Fort William or wherever who has acute healthcare needs, because if that individual is likely to spend three days in custody from a Friday to a Monday, that means that police officers are getting taken off the street to watch him or her for that period of time, whereas the real healthcare treatment will happen in the big centres, where we have nurses and/or doctors permanently located.

If we know that a custody is going to be kept for court, we make a decision on really strong criteria about their vulnerability and whether we are happy to do it. Has their family been told? Is their case being dealt with? Do they have all their property? Has their solicitor been notified? All these things are addressed first and then the decision is made to move the custody, but it is because of their healthcare needs and it is about looking after them. These are real people.

**Rona Mackay:** Do you call in anyone else to help with that assessment or do the police keep it in house?

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** I am trying to think. In the areas where we do not have healthcare professionals, the sergeant will look at the record and look at the vulnerability questions. There are arrangements in place in some of the rural areas where they phone the locum doctor and seek his or her view on whether the individual should be moved to a centre with 24-hour healthcare coverage. If that is the right thing to do, we would do it.

**The Convener:** Mr Steele, do you have any comments on that particular issue? I know that it was an issue that was of concern previously.

**Calum Steele:** Yes—I have comments on both issues. Mr McEwan is correct in terms of the weekend transfer. The number of people in custody being taken from one custody facility to another has not quite gone off the end of a cliff, but it has certainly reduced significantly. However, the issue of people being driven long distances to get into a custody facility in the first place remains.

I corresponded with SPF representatives across the country in advance of coming here, and I can give a simple example. In U division, which covers the south-west of Scotland, if Ayr closes, custodies from Girvan are taken to Kilmarnock, which takes an hour or an hour and a half. That is just counting getting there and back.

The other area which causes considerable concern, which seems to be getting worse rather than better, is the amount of delay that they experience when they get to a custody facility. One of the examples that I highlighted in the correspondence was of a three-hour delay in February from the individual being in the back of a van to getting through the door. I have other examples of delays that are not quite as lengthy, but certainly those examples are far from indicative of a productive use of police resource.

There is an example from another custody area—a prisoner was waiting for an inordinate length of time in the back of a van and, despite being handcuffed, that prisoner was able to set himself on fire. There are a whole series of concerns around that but thanks to the quick thinking and actions of the police officers, serious injury was prevented. Other examples—

**Rona Mackay:** Can I interrupt? Generally, what causes the delays when you get to these centres?

**Calum Steele:** It is probably cumulative. First and foremost, there is the issue that the centres are still not properly resourced. Next, there is the issue that additional bureaucratic obligations have been placed upon the duty officers as a consequence of the new obligations of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2016. Those two issues lead to the greatest degree of concern.

We have also had an example where prisoners—you can argue about whether it is through frustration or just through badness—were kicking off in the back of a van and broke the Perspex, because the Perspex had degraded over time. That is an indication of another area of the police service which has problems because of a lack of money—the fleet is getting older, which means that the Perspex security screens are degrading. The Perspex broke and a prisoner was left with a weapon.

The issues of custody are a microcosm reflecting problems elsewhere in the system. I have highlighted previously the issue of local policing officers waiting for long periods of time and having to deal with increasingly frustrated and irate prisoners. Leaving prisoners waiting for three hours in the back of a van is not something that the police service should be proud of. It is not the fault of any individual officer; it is happening because the service does not have the resource to be able to deal with the challenges that it is facing.

**Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP):** You spoke about your correspondence with representatives in advance of this meeting and the correspondence you received back from them about delays. Was there evidence that that was an issue in our big cities as well as in other places?

**Calum Steele:** Yes, indeed. The specific example that I highlighted of a three-hour delay was in our biggest city.

**Ben Macpherson:** Thank you.

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** I am happy to comment on the two scenarios. I am aware of the chap Calum Steele said set himself on fire—I have looked at that case now and I can give you a chronology. A violent custody was locked up in Grangemouth. He was searched by the police officers prior to going in the van, but this guy was extremely violent. The officers decided on handcuffs to the rear, which was the right thing to do, and he was taken in the van to Falkirk. Only one other prisoner was getting booked in at that point.

There is a holding area in Falkirk that has CCTV. Normal procedure would be to get the guy out of the van into the holding area and wait for the custody who was getting booked in to be dealt with. However, this chap was so violent that the decision by the local policing officers on the ground was to keep him in the van until that custody was clear. At that point, they saw him rummaging in his back pocket. He produced a lighter. He did not set fire to any clothing and he did not harm himself in any way; the two officers removed the lighter from him. An adverse incident was reported. I have looked at the documentation and that is exactly the chronology around that. We need to be clear about the reasons behind it and the extent of what happened. Nobody set themselves on fire. The guy had a lighter in his back pocket that was then taken away by the officers, so that was really good work from them.

In relation to the delays in Glasgow, there was a football match and four custodies. The three-hour delay is from the point of arrest at the football ground to the point of release. That was the three-hour period. The actual booking-in process took 16 minutes. It is all there on the information technology system, if the members want to see it. It took 16 minutes to book that custody in, but from the point of arrest at the football ground to the point of release—not incarceration, release—the timing was just in excess of three hours. The facts are there and I am happy to share the facts should the committee want them in due course.

**The Convener:** Mr McEwan, I do not think that anyone doubts Police Scotland's wish to treat prisoners humanely. We seem to be in a very

peculiar position where we have two witnesses in front of us, both serving police officers, and one is telling us that someone set themselves on fire while the other one is saying that that did not happen.

It seems strange that someone still had the means to set themselves on fire in their possession if they had been properly searched, but I am presuming that is because they were so violent. Is that—

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** Yes, that is my understanding. In the real world, in front-line policing, the police officers did the best they could in the circumstances to search that extremely violent individual. You cannot strip search somebody out in the daylight. A full strip search would be done in a custody environment. The officers did what they could, but this chap had a lighter secreted wherever it was; he had access to it. He tried to do something but he did not injure himself or set his clothes on fire and there was some very positive action from the officers.

**Calum Steele:** The only thing that I have to add to that, convener, is that I have spoken to the officers involved.

**The Convener:** There is a bit of an impasse there. Liam McArthur is next.

**Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** Rona Mackay has covered some of this, but it may be worth exploring a little further. Reference has been made to long distances. I think that Calum Steele referred to an excessive distance. Is there a definition, or can you give us more detail around that?

In the example that you cited, I think that the move was not from one custody centre to another, but from point of arrest to the nearest custody centre, because one custody centre was not available. Does the problem arise from the first custody centre that the prisoner is taken to, or is the issue around transfers between custody centres?

**Calum Steele:** I think that it is both. The definition will very much be dependent on the local circumstances that prevail at the time. What may seem like an excessive distance for getting to a custody facility in a relatively quiet—I use that term advisedly—rural area might not necessarily seem excessive in an exceptionally busy urban area. However, the issue of delay is multifaceted. It is not just a matter of the transfer time; it is about what happens when the person physically reaches the facility. Some of the greatest areas of challenge seem to be presented at that point.

We highlighted our concern over the additional administrative burdens that would come through the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2016; we did

that some time ago, if not at this committee at its sister body, the Justice Committee, but those concerns seem to have fallen on deaf ears. We continue to have concerns, and those whom I have corresponded with have indicated that the delay in getting people into custody is much greater than it was previously. In fact—

**Liam McArthur:** I am sorry to interrupt. However, both you and Mr McEwan have talked about the number of people coming into custody dropping significantly, so one would imagine that those who are being taken into custody might present more of a challenge and that the circumstances are likely to be more complex or challenging. Therefore—this is not to justify inordinate lengths of time—would the expectation not be that the process is likely to take a bit longer for those cases that are being brought into custody now?

**Calum Steele:** I can understand the temptation to go down that line of thinking, but those people were still being dealt with before. It is not as though we are bringing different people into custody; by and large, we are talking about a lot of repeat offenders.

**Liam McArthur:** But presumably it is not the case that delays were not occurring before the 2016 act came into force. I am not sure about the figures, either as an average or the proportion of cases that were taking a long period of time, but I do not imagine that those delays did not exist previously.

**Calum Steele:** They existed, but not to the same extent. The diminution of numbers has been more than offset by the increase in administrative burden that was created by the 2016 act. It is interesting that you are asking about the number of custodies, because again, as recently as early this week, representatives have corresponded with me to advise that, in some parts of the country, they are being encouraged to make contact with the custody centre before they get there; officers are experiencing discouragement in taking custodies to the custody centre in the first place and in some instances they have been directed elsewhere. Mr McEwan has discussed one example. It will probably not be helpful to go into that today but, if I may, I will quote the correspondence that I have before me:

“Officers are encouraged to phone ahead to check that there is space and no queue and then custody sergeants are taking the opportunity to tell cops not to bring bodies in even for cases like offensive weapon.”

13:45

Such pressures on custody areas are creating additional pressures for officers in the street. We have an absolutely retrospective review of the

decision to arrest, but it is almost as though the decision to arrest in the first place is being second-guessed by the custody centre that has not been exposed in first-hand terms to the events that the police officers who decided to make the arrest in the first place were exposed to.

**Liam McArthur:** I want to see whether I have understood this fully. You are talking about discussions that take place and which go into the detail of the circumstances of any arrest; it is not simply that a conversation has been had with the custody unit and they are saying, "We would really rather you did not turn up with this potential custody." A decision is therefore being taken to release under investigative liberation—

**Calum Steele:** There may be a degree of truth in that. I appreciate that there is always difficulty in receiving a third-hand account from someone who was not there in the flesh at the time. Indeed, Mr McEwan is in the same position when he unfortunately has to rely on the content of forms, which may not necessarily be as accurate as the first-hand account that officers have delivered to me.

I am going out on a limb here, but I offer members of the committee the opportunity to come to a meeting of the SPF joint central committee; indeed, I could convene a meeting of that committee especially to host members of this committee so that they can hear at first-hand from the police officers exactly what their experiences of custody are. I am telling you as honestly as I can that police officers are remarkably frustrated at how custody is performing as a function. The issue is not the delivery of the service by those who are working very hard within it, and there is certainly no slight on the professionalism of those, whether they are police staff or police officers, who are doing their damndest to deliver a first-class service in very trying circumstances. The simple reality is that this area of policing is phenomenally underresourced and it carries considerable risk.

**Lucille Inglis:** The committee should also bear in mind that, in some areas, only one PCSO will be on, so that delays things. Also, to use Ayr as an example, they stick to the SOP. If they have 10 prisoners, that is it; they say, "No, we do not have staff to cope with it" so they then have to transfer the custody somewhere else. That must have a bearing. Without a doubt, people have to queue when they come into custody centres and staffing has to be an issue in that situation. That has a domino effect—at the weekend, I found out that one PCSO had travelled 128 miles in a weekend to cover other custody areas. When he went, they had to bring somebody in to backfill from the street. That person is not as up to speed as the PCSO would have been, had he remained there. Everything has a knock-on effect.

Transfers have not been done away with altogether, but they are certainly being reduced. We are not hearing the horror stories of people going from the east right through to the west, being unable to get in there, trying somewhere else and then coming all the way back, having spent all night travelling round the centres. People are still being transferred, although that has been reduced, but we are now moving the PCSOs around to try to cover gaps elsewhere and then backfilling those posts with less-experienced people. That has to have an effect.

**Liam McArthur:** Mr McEwan referred earlier to the example of somebody being arrested in Glasgow, but the case being likely to be heard in Aberdeen and therefore it making more sense for the custody to be in Aberdeen. Is the reverse also happening? If people in Ayr are saying that they cannot accept any more custodies, and then someone whose case is going to be heard there is put into custody somewhere distant, does that undermine the benefits of the transfers that have been taking place elsewhere?

**Lucille Inglis:** Yes.

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** A lot of points have been raised that I will certainly not attempt to capture. Under the 2016 act, there is a new form called the police interview—rights of suspects form. Without question, the legal requirement to fulfil that documentation takes longer than the previous section 14 documentation. It is an eight or a nine-page document, which takes longer, and the officers and police staff will take a bit of time to get used to that.

I will move forward to the plans that we have in place. I have touched on some of the investment. One of the things that we are looking at is iris recognition, which some forces down south are using. When a custody comes in, they scan the eyeball and the IT self-populates 90 per cent of the form; booking-in process times have reduced from about 40 minutes to nine minutes. We are exploring things like that and looking at innovative ways of building into the criminal justice hubs to reduce delays and some of the waiting times.

We are building new charge bars. We have built one at St Leonard's already. We have built a holding centre in Inverness, where people used to have to queue. The holding centre has CCTV, so the custodies are not queuing in the back of vehicles as they did four years ago and 14 years ago—and 24 years ago before that. We are creating a holding centre where they can be monitored by CCTV in a more pleasant environment. We are trying to modernise and to do so very quickly.

The final point—I am conscious of time—is that 78 criminal justice PCSOs are coming in this year.

My proposal to the force executive, which it is considering for the year after that, is for a further 80 criminal justice PCSOs. Over two years, my preference is for 150 new members of staff to come into this division. Sixty-two police officers will be released back to the front line and we will create a sustainable division that will then begin to take work away from police officers. Currently—this has happened for 30, 40 or 50 years—police officers arrest or detain the custody out in the street and are present throughout the booking-in process, the photograph and finger-printing, and the solicitor access and consultation. All that work in the custody environment takes three hours of local policing police officer time.

I want to build a model in which we take that work from local policing; local policing staff would hand over the custody and go right back out in the street. That is the model that we are trying to create. That is the proposal that was agreed by the force executive as recently as a fortnight ago. That is the direction of travel and we are incrementally trying to get there, but there is a two-year period from start to finish date and there will be an increase of 150 new members of police staff, with first-line managers built in. We are looking to develop and enhance the skill set of our police staff as they come in in order to release more police officers back to the front-line.

**Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP):** Before I ask my question, I declare that I have a close family member who is a police constable.

We have covered an awful lot about processing, so I think that I am left with only one very small thing, which relates to the PIROS form that has just been referred to. Is that form in the public domain? If it is not, could we see it?

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** I think that it is in the public domain as part of the 2016 act, but I could certainly get you a copy.

**Stewart Stevenson:** I think that that would flesh out some of the things that have been said.

Let me raise a new issue that has not been covered—of course, we are very limited for time—in a question for Police Scotland. Can you give us a brief update on what is happening with the custody provision estate review?

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** I am not sure what you mean. Is that part of—

**Stewart Stevenson:** I understand that you are looking at what you really need, particularly in the light of reduction of numbers and other considerations. Are there any matters related to that that have not emerged in the previous evidence that we have taken?

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** We are looking to create four criminal justice hubs, which I have spoken about, in year 1, with an increase in staff; they are in Aberdeen, Inverness, Falkirk and London Road. In year 2, we are looking to create another five criminal justice hubs, so that we are doing all the work that local policing is currently doing, which I spoke about, and the five other key areas. There will be nine criminal justice hubs strategically located across the country, which will deal with the vast majority of custodies that come in, although not them all. We will retain the current custody provision that we have, but as a consequence of the reduced numbers we are looking at further estate rationalisation. I am not entirely sure yet where that will go to, because it is too soon after the 2016 act. I have given the figures, but I want to leave it another few months to get a true baseline about where our custody numbers are going to be.

**Stewart Stevenson:** Okay; that is fine. Let me ask a very simple final question. You said “the vast majority” are going to the hubs. What proportion of custodies is that approximately?

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** To be honest, I would have to look at that—

**Stewart Stevenson:** You used the words “vast majority”, so you obviously have something in mind.

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** I would say that it is about 80 per cent of custodies, but I would have to really look at the numbers.

**Stewart Stevenson:** Perhaps you could let us know later.

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** I could certainly do that.

**Daniel Johnson:** I would like to ask a couple of questions. It is clear from the broad sweep of the questions that have been asked that much of the solution to easing the burdens is the delivery of the new criminal justice hubs and the bringing online of the new omnicompetence training. I love that term—I wonder whether I could take some omnicompetence training.

Some caution has been expressed by the SPF and Unison about the timelines that are envisaged for the delivery of phase 1 of that programme. Could Lucille Inglis and Calum Steele elaborate on that? Is the concern simply about the training of the PCSOs or are there other concerns about the timing? What impacts will there be on the delivery of the other phases of that programme, given that phase 1 involves just three of the nine hubs that Garry McEwan said that the full programme covers?

**Lucille Inglis:** We are certainly on board with the restructuring that is taking place with the hubs

and so on. A lot of butting of heads is being done over shift patterns. That is a big thing. The time is going quickly. With regard to recruitment, there are still some vacancies that we need to work around. We will monitor the situation as we go along. Rather than just say that the trial is for a year or 18 months, we will keep monitoring it. We will tweak it as we go, if we need to, or if it is not what we thought it was going to be. That is where we are.

The recruitment is being done for the team leaders, which we welcome. Going forward, there should be no police officers involved—it should all be PCSOs who are caring for the welfare of the prisoners, which is a good thing from our point of view, as it releases police officers back on to the street. We are expert at this. The PCSOs are well trained for that role. That is where we are just now. The recruitment is being done. I think that the training will start in June or July, if we can agree a shift pattern.

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** The training is a challenge, because it is a three-week training course and we are trying to broaden out the skill set to enable people to do a number of different things. Rather than being trained just in custody, case management or PNC and CHS, they will be trained in them all. It is a three-week training programme that will take place in July. The college is gearing up to train the initial 45 who are coming in in July; a further 25 will come in later on in the year. It is a big investment in staff, and it is a challenge from the point of view of training and learning and development to build the programme, but the force is definitely prioritising it.

**Lucille Inglis:** There is a wee bit of apprehension to do with dealing with productions, warrants, records and so on. Initially, we were concerned about the impact on people in the departments concerned who are already doing those jobs. However, we are assured that the intention is not to replace them, but to help out. This might be optimistic, but I think that there is a view that there is more downtime than there actually is. It will be interesting to see what happens as we go forward. Some staff are quite happy, because they see the training as extending their role and giving them more initiative, whereas others are wary. You will know how it is when it comes to change.

**Daniel Johnson:** It sounds as if these people will be asked to do a huge number of different things. They will have huge responsibility. Is three weeks enough to train people adequately to perform such a range of roles and take on that level of responsibility?

14:00

**Lucille Inglis:** The training will give them the rudiments; it will explain how the computer systems and so on work. A lot of the training will be on-the-job training and will involve mentoring and buddying. People will not suddenly become fully-qualified PCSOs and just slot into the workplace; they will continue to get training after the basic training.

**Daniel Johnson:** You said that, when it comes to whether we are on track, you will review that as you go along. Are you confident that the delivery timescales for phase 1 will be met?

**Lucille Inglis:** I am not confident; I am hopeful. We will not know until we start the process, to be honest.

**Daniel Johnson:** I think that Calum Steele is interested in commenting.

**Calum Steele:** I am, especially as you identified me to answer the question in the first place.

The short answer is that it very much depends on the appetite and hunger of the service to make it happen. It is not quite a case of doing what Archimedes said—"If you give me a lever long enough and a fulcrum upon which to place it, we can move the world"—but the same is true of training and investment and getting people through. If we want to train more people, we need to have more people in training to deliver the training. We tend to work to the lowest common denominator with regard to what can be accommodated by the people we have instead of looking to build the capacity.

I am not overtly pessimistic, but I do think that the timescales are very optimistic, in so far as it might well be the case that they deal with the resourcing requirements to deliver the service, but as far as we can see, there does not seem to be a great deal of resilience built into those numbers. Given the likelihood of the criminal justice or the custody area being subject to absences and abstractions through training, illness, leave and all the rest of it, it looks to us as though what is proposed is on the very bare bones of having that kind of tolerance built in. Given what we know about how the service is responding to the financial constraints that have been placed on it, that comes as no surprise to us whatsoever.

**Daniel Johnson:** Garry McEwan, could you address some of those concerns? When do you expect phase 1 to conclude? What do you view as the key risk factors in delivering to that date? How are you mitigating them?

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** The additional staff are coming in for the beginning of July. There will then be a three-week training programme,



after which the staff will be cascaded to the two hubs in the north and the one here in central.

The majority of the 45 posts involve staff who are already in the organisation who want such opportunities. I think that 35 of the 45 posts will be filled by existing staff, but we will need to fill their jobs. They will move across to the new jobs, but we will need to fill those posts, so we are now advertising externally to fill those.

As I said at the beginning, there is a risk involved. It will be a challenge to get those staff in place, because a range of factors are involved, such as who is interested in the job, when they can be released from their current position elsewhere in society, the 28 days' notice period and so on. All that I can do to reassure the committee is say that getting the necessary training and resources in place is on our risk register. It is one of the number 1 priorities for the organisation to get those staff in, to get them trained and to get them in the hubs, because the sooner we can deliver the benefits of those three hours of work to local policing, the more officers there will be out on the streets responding to calls and dealing with local community issues.

**Daniel Johnson:** Critically, when do you think that the process will conclude?

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** We are looking to have the 45 staff in place by July and the following 25 in place by January 2019. We will have to monitor the success or otherwise of the approach, because we are looking to build a totally new concept, which we think is innovative and will future proof what the criminal justice services division needs to look like, but we must evaluate it. I would welcome coming back here in due course to give the committee the opportunity to scrutinise it.

**The Convener:** On that point, Mr McEwan, would it be possible for you to give us an update on the training and deployment at key points?

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** Certainly.

**The Convener:** The committee maintains a keen interest in the important issue of custody.

I have a final question, which relates to a suggestion that fits with my thinking that everything to do with policing should be as local as possible. The SPF has suggested that day-to-day control of custody provision could be given to local divisional commanders. Given that it is a key function—I am not trying to do you out of a job, Mr McEwan—would there be any problem with that? Collaborative working has always happened across the service. Would that not send a very clear signal on the importance of justice—

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** I was a local commander before moving to the national level. I

think that there are benefits around quality control and the ability to flex resources across divisional boundaries, which happens now. Lucille Inglis mentioned that PCSOs are making round trips of more than 100 miles. That is too great a distance to travel, but if we were to return to having 13 different divisional custody programmes, I think that we would not have the ability to flex resource. The view of Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary in Scotland is that the NCS is the right structure. The Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2016 talks about operational independence. What that means is that the custody function, the review process and the ability to justify and warrant the arrest of individuals should be independent from operational policing. My fear would be that if we—

**The Convener:** But that can happen at the moment with policing on a range of issues. Operational independence can be achieved by using someone who is detached from the initial—

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** Ten years ago, there would have been one sergeant who would have had an overview of custody and operational policing. That is the model that we have moved away from over the past decade. My fear would be that we would return to that system, which would be to go against the essence of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2016.

**Calum Steele:** That suggestion comes up regularly among those whom I represent. There is a world of difference between having operational independence and keeping something separate from operational policing. I think that there is a danger of conflating the two. To some extent, the idea merits further examination, because in much the same way as policing has evolved over the past number of years, it seems rather counterintuitive—to use the word that I used at the beginning—to suggest that policing would not be able to adapt its practices to ensure that such operational independence could be maintained and that we would just revert back to the bad old practice of days gone by, when custody care was undoubtedly not as good as it is now.

If I were looking for a positive note to finish on, I would say that the custody care is head and shoulders above what it was previously, but I do not believe that it is necessary to have a separate custody division to enable that to happen. Proper training, proper accountability and proper reporting lines should be capable of delivering it because, once upon a time, the police service was perfectly able to do that.

**Lucille Inglis:** I think that the expertise lies within custody, to be quite honest, and I think that it would be a mistake to go back to local policing being in charge of that.

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** My final point is that, given that there are 13 divisions, the nine criminal justice hubs go across divisional boundaries. In my opinion, we need to establish the criminal justice hubs and then have a debate in two years' time about whether certain elements of the function should return. I think that that is the time to have the debate. We need to get the nine hubs in place. If we were to cascade it back to 13 divisions at this point, I would be surprised if it ever happened. The process would not be as streamlined as we hope that it will be.

**Margaret Mitchell:** I have one clarification. You said that there were 72,000 fewer individuals in custody. Over what period?

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** Each year.

**Margaret Mitchell:** Annually?

**Chief Superintendent McEwan:** Yes. In 2013-14, there were 202,000 individuals in custody; in 2017-18, the figure was 130,000.

**Calum Steele:** In two years' time, we will be closing our custody centres. [*Laughter.*]

**The Convener:** If there are no further questions, I thank Mr McEwan, Mr Steele and Ms Inglis very much indeed for their detailed responses. That is much appreciated.

14:09

*Meeting continued in private until 14:25.*

This is the final edition of the *Official Report* of this meeting. It is part of the Scottish Parliament *Official Report* archive and has been sent for legal deposit.

---

Published in Edinburgh by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, the Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

---

All documents are available on  
the Scottish Parliament website at:

[www.parliament.scot](http://www.parliament.scot)

Information on non-endorsed print suppliers  
is available here:

[www.parliament.scot/documents](http://www.parliament.scot/documents)

For information on the Scottish Parliament contact  
Public Information on:

Telephone: 0131 348 5000

Textphone: 0800 092 7100

Email: [sp.info@parliament.scot](mailto:sp.info@parliament.scot)

---



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba