

<b>Meeting of South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership</b>	<b>Integration Joint Board</b>	
<b>Held on:</b>	<b>10<sup>th</sup> June 2026</b>	
<b>Agenda Item:</b>	<b>21</b>	
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Scottish Prison Estate Pressures</b>	
<b>Summary:</b>		
<p>The purpose of this report is to appraise the IJB on the current pressures within the Scottish prison estate, the Scottish Government response through emergency and accelerated early release arrangements, and impact upon current service services provision.</p>		
<b>Author:</b>	<b>Gary Hoey, Head of Children’s Health, Care and Justice Service</b>	
<b>Action required:</b>		
That the Board notes the contents of this report.		
<b>Route to meeting:</b>		
<b>Requested by IJB</b>		
<b>Directions:</b>		<b>Implications:</b>
1. No Directions Required	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Financial <input type="checkbox"/>
2. Directions to NHS Ayrshire & Arran	<input type="checkbox"/>	HR <input type="checkbox"/>
3. Directions to South Ayrshire Council	<input type="checkbox"/>	Legal <input type="checkbox"/>
4. Directions to both SAC & NHS	<input type="checkbox"/>	Equalities <input type="checkbox"/>
		Sustainability <input type="checkbox"/>
		Policy <input type="checkbox"/>
		ICT <input type="checkbox"/>

## **SCOTTISH PRISON ESTATE PRESSURES**

### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to appraise the IJB on the current pressures within the Scottish prison estate, the Scottish Government response through emergency and accelerated early release arrangements, and potential impact upon current service services provision.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 That the Board notes the contents of this report.

### **3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

3.1 Scotland's prison population remains above operational capacity, with 8,587 prisoners recorded in May 2026. In response to sustained pressures and risks to safe prison operation, the Scottish Government implemented Emergency Early Release (EER) arrangements in late 2025, releasing approximately 615 short-term prisoners.

3.2 Further measures are now being introduced through the release of eligible short-term prisoners at 30% of sentence completion (STP30), anticipated to release a further 200–300 individuals nationally during May and June 2026.

3.3 National justice partners continue to develop contingency arrangements and reforms focused on reducing short remand periods, promoting community alternatives to custody, and supporting wider sentencing reform.

### **4. REPORT**

4.1 The increasing use of early release potentially will have a direct effect on South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership, Council, local commissioned services and wider resources and services.

4.2 Justice Services may experience increased demand dependent upon the status of individuals released in aspects of their roles and duties work such as risk assessment, supervision, monitoring and rehabilitation support.

4.3 Housing services may experience greater pressures as individuals may elect to settle in south Ayrshire post early release thus creating extra demand on housing support, temporary accommodation and homeless services.

4.4 Services which aim to promote the emotional health and physical health, and wellbeing of individuals may experience added demands to meet support them in terms of mental health, addiction recovery and trauma. The Chief Social Work Officer report published in October highlights that growing multiple and complex needs of those who use their services.

- 4.5 Community perception of the scheme may also create demand for community safety interventions and support for victims where perpetrators are subject to early release.
- 4.6 As this scheme has just been announced there is no cohesive data set in terms of the potential impact of this to facilitate planning and resource management. This would have to occur within existing resources as no additional funding has been made available to Partnerships or Authorities.
- 4.7 Proposals being considered with regards to reducing short remand periods and promoting community alternatives to custody if progressed will bring additional demand upon South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Justice Services as this could lead to an increase in Community Payback Orders, Monitoring, Supervision and management and servicing of unpaid work orders.
- 4.8 The overall direction of travel towards prevention, early intervention, and greater use of community justice alternatives is welcomed. However, implementation will require additional and sustainable investment into local justice, health, housing, and social care services to manage increased demand and achieve positive outcomes.

## **5. STRATEGIC CONTEXT**

- 5.1 The justice reform programmes and initiatives outlined in this paper relate to the following strategic objectives of South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership
- We help build communities where people are safe
  - We focus on prevention and tackling inequality
  - We nurture and are part of communities that care for each other
  - We work together to give you the right care in the right place

## **6. IMPLICATIONS**

### **6.1 Financial Implications**

- 6.1.1 There are no clear financial implications as there is no emergent data on the impact the reform and programmes may have,

### **6.2 Human Resource Implications**

- 6.2.1 There are no Human Resource implications arising from this report.

### **6.3 Legal Implications**

- 6.3.1 There are no Legal implications arising from this report.

### **6.4 Equalities implications**

- 6.4.1 There are no Equalities implications arising from this report.

### **6.5 Sustainability implications**

6.5.1 There are no Sustainability implications arising from this report.

## **6.6 Clinical/professional assessment**

6.6.1 The report highlights the potential impact of the Early Prisoner Release and Justice reform. There is a paucity of emergent data and case examples that may support the prediction of the rise in demand on services.

## **7. CONSULTATION AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

7.1 The contents of this report are gathered from reports by COSLA, Social Work Scotland and informed by local practice knowledge within SAHSCP Justice Services.

## **8. RISK ASSESSMENT**

8.1 The accelerated release of prisoners without proportionate investment in local community services may increase risks relating to homelessness, relapse into substance misuse, mental health deterioration, and reoffending.

### **APPENDICES**

N/A

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

N/A

### **REPORT AUTHOR AND PERSON TO CONTACT**

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