

THE PAROLE BOARD FOR SCOTLAND – Scotland’s Parole Court

1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023

BUSINESS PLAN

We will deliver our statutory functions to ensure that only prisoners who are an acceptable risk may serve the remainder of their sentence in the community under the supervision of a social worker whilst subject to licence conditions which are lawful, necessary and proportionate.

In doing so we will strive for excellence, openness and continuous improvement and learning in all that we do. In carrying out our functions we will respect all those who we work with.

Broader context

This planning year will continue to be dominated by the need to plan for, react and recover from the Covid-19 pandemic. Over the course of the pandemic the Board has continued to demonstrate its ability to respond quickly to developments and to put in place working arrangements that allow our statutory responsibilities to be met. The Board members and Parole Scotland staff have been working remotely since March 2020. At the outset of the reporting year we are hopeful that we will continue to move out of the pandemic and the necessary constraints placed on the work of the Board will continue to ease. We remain mindful of the need however to remain cautious in the face of uncertainty and prepared to react to any future developments that impact on recovery.

A number of amendments to the Parole Board Rules commenced on 1 March 2021. These were: -

- An explicit statement in the Rules that the Board may take into account the safety and welfare of victims and their families

- The introduction of a right to request to attend Parole Tribunals for registered victims in Part IV cases¹
- Where a release decision is made in Part IV cases, a requirement for the Board to publish an anonymised summary of that decision and to issue a copy of that summary to registered victims, unless they indicate that they do not want to receive a copy of that decision.

The Board has implemented these Rules amendments including, from March 2022, observation of Tribunals. A Victims' Team has been recruited who manage all aspects of the Board's interactions with victims. This is however a new area of the work and we will continue to refine and build on our approach on the basis of experience and feedback over the coming year.

Scottish Ministers have confirmed that they will undertake a comprehensive review and rewrite of the Parole Board Rules by the end of 2022 in consultation with the Board and other organisations involved in the parole process. This commitment is welcomed.

The Bail and Release from Custody Bill is likely to be introduced to parliament in June 2022. This may introduce additional functions for the Board. We will work closely with the Scottish Government over the reporting year to plan for any changes.

As noted in last year's Business Plan, the Board has developed outline proposals for a more effective, efficient and objectively independent parole system which have been shared with the Scottish Government in the last financial year. Due to the pandemic little progress on this issue has been made over the last year, but the Board remains committed to pursuing these proposals with the support of the Scottish Government.

Actions

Provide expert input into the Scottish Government's revision of the Parole Board Rules	Throughout the year – timescale determined by Scottish Ministers
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1. Part IV cases refers to Part IV of the Parole Board (Scotland) Rules 2001. Cases considered under Part IV are currently those involving consideration of release for indeterminate sentence prisoners – i.e. life sentence and OLR prisoners and Extended Sentence Prisoners, who have been recalled in the extended part of their sentence.

Continue to develop, refine and implement new processes resulting from the Rules amendments that commenced on 1 March 2021	April – July 2022
Provide expert advice to Scottish Ministers on any other matter referred to the Board by Scottish Ministers which is connected with the early release or recall of prisoners.	As required

Decision making

Our decision making will be rigorous and independent. We will increase our understanding, and assessment, of risk. We will continue to apply and develop the system of constructive member peer review, introduced in the last planning year, to promote quality and consistency.

Actions

Review temporary changes made to SWS and SPS report requirements and adopt changes where beneficial	August 2022
Collaboration with international partners on good practice	Ongoing
Monitor the application of the MoU with SPS and CJSW and engage with them on corrective action as necessary	Ongoing
Review, agree and publish a revised scheme of delegation	July 2022
Work with the Scottish Government to plan for any changes to the Board's functions resulting from the Bail and Release from Custody Bill	ongoing

Our People

We will value and invest in our most valuable resource...our people. By working in collaboration with all staff and members on the decisions and issues that affect them we will ensure fairness and equality of opportunity; a working environment that is safe, supportive, and encourages innovation and personal and career development.

Actions

Develop and implement a staff training plan	September 2022
Review and refresh member training plan	September 2022
Ensure all staff have monthly conversations with line managers and the annual appraisal cycle is completed	Ongoing
Provide opportunities for staff to attend meetings with Chief Executive/Chair	Ongoing
Develop and introduce a statement of principles and ethics for Board members	August 2022
Recruit additional Board members (legal and general) to meet current and future requirements	January 2023
Work collaboratively with all staff to develop and implement post pandemic hybrid working arrangements	ongoing

Administrative support

We will use improvement methodology to continuously and collaboratively test and improve our processes. Our focus will be on improving quality and efficiency, learning from mistakes, using performance indicators, and auditing and refining our own practices.

Actions

Ensure statutory timescales and process targets are met	Ongoing
Continue to review Corporate policies and produce and implement recommendations	Ongoing
Drive continuous process improvement involving members in the development and rollout of tests of change	Ongoing
Take forward any recommendations on our Records Management Plan from the National Records of Scotland (NRS).	March 2023
Report on Standards of Service for victims of crime	March 2022

Working arrangements

We will continue to seek opportunities to continuously improve the way we work to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the parole system.

Actions

Work with information providers including SPS, COPFS, SWS, SCTS and Police Scotland to develop effective information sharing arrangements and to ensure that they fully understand	Throughout the year
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their obligations to the Board and comply with the Board's requirements as a court fully and timeously	
Embed new working arrangements for post pandemic Tribunal, Oral Hearing and Casework arrangements with use of video technology as a default	May 2022
Monitor casework meeting numbers and implement changes if required	Throughout the planning year.
Learn from process and working arrangements changes implemented in response to the pandemic, and make changes in response where improvements have been identified	Ongoing
Develop and implement a triage system to identify issues with dossiers at referral stage to reduce adjournments and postponements	September 2022

Technology

We will continue to develop electronic working including a default position of members working electronically and the electronic transmission of dossiers to solicitors.

Actions

Agree and implement default use of video technology for post pandemic Tribunal, Oral Hearing and Casework arrangements	May 2022
Work with SPS to improve the quality of accommodation for hearings and implement internet access in prison establishments in line with the MoU.	Ongoing
Review current provision of laptops to members and refresh where required.	December 2022

Work with the Scottish Government to develop and deliver a new CMS system	Ongoing (system needs to be introduced by October 2023 when support for current system will cease)
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Raising awareness

We will seek opportunities to raise awareness of the Board's status as Scotland's parole court , what we do as a court and how we contribute to the wider Scottish Justice context with agencies which are involved in the parole process and the public.

Actions

Ensure that the status of PBS as a parole court is emphasised where possible and appropriate in communications and interactions.	Ongoing
Seek opportunities to speak at conferences or events	Ongoing
Seek further opportunities to publicise the work of the Board	Ongoing
Meet with public and third sector organisations with whom we work to inform them of the work of the Board and to collaborate on service improvement.	Ongoing
Engage with senior officials and officers of key agencies including COPFS, Police Scotland, SPS, SCTS, Social Work to facilitate the flow of information and to provide guidance on the status and powers of the Board as a parole court.	November 2022

Sponsorship

We will continue to work closely with the Scottish Government sponsor team to ensure governance arrangements are fit for purpose, reflecting the particular nature of the Board's role and responsibilities.

Actions

Agree and communicate revised instruments of appointment with judicial indemnity provision for members	September 2022
Develop and agree a revised memorandum of understanding with the Scottish Government with a focus on emphasising the Board's independence.	October 2022

Monitoring and Review

Progress against this business plan will be monitored and reviewed at Quarterly meetings of the Parole Board Management Group.



Colin Spivey
Chief Executive, Parole Board for Scotland



John Watt
Chairman, Parole Board for Scotland