

Colin Spivey
Chief Executive



By email - justicecommittee@parliament.scot

Margaret Mitchell MSP
Convener
Justice Committee
c/o Justice Committee Clerks
Room T2.60
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

19 May 2020

Dear Ms Mitchell

Prison releases

Thank you for your letter dated 13 May addressed to Mr Watt. I am replying on Mr Watt's behalf.

Our priority at this time is to ensure the Health and Welfare of our members and staff and all others involved in the parole system, whilst delivering our statutory responsibilities.

All of the Board's staff and members are now working from home. However, we continue to hold casework meetings, Tribunals and Oral Hearings. These are being conducted remotely by teleconference and/or Skype and there has been no significant impact on our ability or capacity to consider cases. This has been made possible by the flexibility and commitment of the Board's staff and members, and the support and contribution from the Scottish Prison Service, Social Work Scotland and solicitors. Summary information can be found [here](#). We will update this information regularly and intend to expand it to provide wider data and outcomes.

The Board has produced guidance for [members](#), [victims](#), [social workers](#) and [witnesses and solicitors](#) setting out how we will operate during the pandemic. These will be updated as and when the situation develops. In addition the Board will continue to communicate key messages through our [website](#) and on Twitter @ParoleBoardScot.

Despite these practical changes, the procedural requirements of the Parole Board (Scotland) Rules, 2001 continue to apply which means that cases continue to be considered in accordance with the Board's tests for release.

Your letter specifically mentions progression arrangements. These arrangements are a matter for SPS and they will be better placed to comment than ourselves. However it is clear that a lack of access now to, for example, home leaves or offence focused programmes may result in the Board having less evidence in the future with which to satisfy themselves that

an individual's risk can be safely managed in the community. This may lead to a future fall in the number of cases where the decision is to release on parole licence.

I hope the above information is useful. I would be very happy to provide any further information the Committee requests.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Spivey', with a stylized flourish at the end.

COLIN SPIVEY
Chief Executive