
Report To:	Social Work and Social Care Scrutiny Panel	Date:	18 August 2022
Report By:	Allen Stevenson Interim Chief Officer (Inverclyde HSCP)	Report No:	SWSCSP/07/2022/AG
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Subject:	Parole Board Scotland - 'Victims Safe Space' Initiative		

1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 For Decision For Information/Noting
- 1.2 This report provides an outline of a request to Scottish Local Authorities from Parole Scotland in respect of the 'Victim Safe Space' Initiative. The report details the legislative changes leading to the introduction of the 'Victim Safe Space' initiative, outlines the request to Scottish Local Authorities by Parole Scotland and provides an Inverclyde context for background.
- 1.3 Parole Board Scotland (PBS) is a Tribunal non-departmental public body. Its main aim is to ensure that those prisoners who are no longer regarded as presenting a risk to public safety may serve the remainder of their sentence in the community on licence under the supervision of a supervising officer (Criminal Justice Social Worker).
- 1.4 PBS have recently commenced the "Victims Safe Space" initiative which came about following recent legislative changes to the Parole Board Rules, meaning that registered victims of crime have the right to request to observe the prisoner's parole Tribunal. These observations would take place by video link, preferably from a location convenient for the victim.
- 1.5 The Victim's Team within PBS has contacted Criminal Justice Social Work within the HSCP to raise awareness of the initiative and seeking, in principle, the possibility of occasionally using accommodation in local authority areas as a venue for victims who live in Inverclyde.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To note the contents of the report and to support the approval of local authority accommodation for the Victim Safe Space Initiative.

Allen Stevenson
Interim Chief Officer (Inverclyde HSCP)

3.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Parole Board for Scotland (PBS) is a Tribunal non-departmental public body and is a judicial body which is independent of the Scottish Government and impartial in its duties. Its main aim is to ensure that those prisoners who are no longer regarded as presenting a risk to public safety may serve the remainder of their sentence in the community on licence under the supervision of a supervising officer (Criminal Justice Social Worker). Additional responsibilities have been given to the PBS following recent developments in law and procedure.
- 3.2 Those legislative changes have been made under the Parole Board (Scotland) Amendment Rules 2021 (SSI 2021/4) which came into force for all cases referred to the Board by Scottish ministers on or after 1 March 2021. The amended changes introduced enhanced rights to registered victims.
- 3.3 Crucially for victims the legislation was amended to expressly permit the attendance of victims at a tribunal. Rule 26A permits a victim registered under the Victim Notification Scheme (VNS) (parts 1 or 2 of the legislation) to attend a hearing with the authority of the Board. The presumption is that the attendance will be by live link, and rule 26A also permits the victim to be accompanied by a supporter or supporters.
- 3.4 VNS comes in two parts, victims can register to be on either Part 1 or Part 2, or they can register for both. The first part allows victims to receive information about an offender's release. The second part allows victims to make representations to the Parole Board in advance of an offender being considered for release. The Board will consider these representations along with other information on the offender's case before reaching a decision.
- 3.5 Those registered under Part 2 of the VNS are entitled to submit written representations to the Board when considering a prisoner's case. In life sentence cases, an interview with a Board Member may also be requested where a summary will be prepared by the interviewing Member which is then agreed with the registered individual before being provided to the Board. In all Part 2 cases, the registered individual will also receive notification of whether the prisoner is to be released and, if so, any licence conditions relevant to them.

4.0 PROPOSALS

- 4.1 As noted at Section 1.5 of the report, the Victims Team within PBS have made contact with all local authority areas in Scotland. This was initially progressed via The Social Work Scotland Justice Standing Committee which is made up of Chief Social Work Officers, managers from justice social work services, academics and those working in a justice setting in the private and third sector.

4.2 Subsequently, a meeting was held between the Community Justice Lead Officer and Head of Victims Team for PBS noting the following points:

- The observations of a Prisoner’s Parole Tribunal would take place by video link preferably from a location convenient for the victim, this implies that the location would be within the local authority area of the victim.
- As these observations are mainly for life sentence prisoners there would not be a frequent ask of each local authority. It is difficult to ascertain those numbers and frequency but would suggest approximately 2/3 per year. Ultimately the level of need is dependent on the victims that would arise within Inverclyde. Between January and July of 2022 there had been no requests for a Victim Safe Space in Inverclyde.
- The observations would be managed by Parole Board staff with all arrangements, use of technology led by Parole Board Scotland. The role of Inverclyde Council would be to agree room venue. On occasions when a local venue is to be sourced 1 months’ notice would be provided.
- There is no set criteria on the type of meeting space required but there was consensus around the need for privacy and ease of access for those attending (i.e. venue location, venue setting, access to nearby parking/transport hubs).
- Criminal Justice Services are currently hosting an Early Action System Change programme for women involved in the criminal justice system. A stated intention of the programme is for staff within the HSCP and third sector undertake the national trauma training programme STILT (Scottish Trauma Informed Leaders Training). Noting the impact that trauma can have, particularly on victims of crime, some council venues may be unsuitable for a Tribunal observation.

4.3 This proposal has been discussed with the Senior Management Team within the Health and Social Care Partnership and with the Corporate Management Team within Inverclyde Council. With regards to the last point of 4.2 it has been noted that some buildings would not be considered as appropriate owing to the regular business within the locations leading to additional stress to victims or the volume of people accessing certain locations may mean that privacy cannot be assured for victims It has been considered that locations would be considered on a case by case basis following discussions with Parole Board Scotland, victims and Inverclyde Council/HSCP.

4.4 At the Inverclyde Community Justice Partnership meeting on 25 April 2022 this matter was discussed with a recommendation that CJP members consider local accommodation to support Parole Board Scotland’s request. It was confirmed by the Group Manager of The Scottish Fire & Rescue Service (SFRS) that they would be supporting the initiative and Port Glasgow Community Fire Station would be considered as a local setting.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation(s) is(are) agreed:

SUBJECT	YES	NO	N/A
Financial		x	
Legal/Risk		x	
Human Resources		x	
Strategic (LOIP/Corporate Plan)	x		
Equalities & Fairer Scotland Duty			x
Children & Young People’s Rights & Wellbeing			x
Environmental & Sustainability			x
Data Protection			x

5.2 Finance

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
N/A					

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
N/A					

5.3 Legal/Risk

There are no identified legal/risk issues for Inverclyde Council/HSCP contained within this report.

5.4 Human Resources

There are no identified Human Resource issues for Inverclyde Council/HSCP contained within this report.

5.5 Strategic

Inverclyde Community Justice Partnership are currently undertaken preparatory work for the publication of an Inverclyde Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan in April 2023. This document will take cognisance of the recently published National Strategy for Community Justice. The new strategy will reflect the ongoing work to deliver person-centred and trauma-informed services to victims and survivors of crime

6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 This matter has been discussed with the Senior Management Team of the HSCP, Corporate Management Team of Inverclyde Council and Inverclyde Community Justice Partnership.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None