

News release

For immediate use September 12, 2019

Prisons under severe pressure

The Scottish Prison Service faces profound challenges in continuing to run Scotland's overcrowded prisons safely and effectively.

A report by the Auditor General for the Scottish Parliament says the service's revenue budget reduced by 12.5 per cent in real terms between 2014/15 and 2018/19, from £394.7 million to £345.2 million, while its costs are rising.

Prisoner numbers increased by nearly nine per cent in 2018/19, to 8,212, and are set to rise further. Financial pressures are compromising efforts to prepare and support prisoners for life outside prison.

Over the last two years, there have also been significant increases in assaults by prisoners against staff and other prisoners. Stress-related sickness among staff rose by nearly one third in 2018/19, and additional payments to staff working longer hours increased by 65 per cent to £4.25 million.

Caroline Gardner, Auditor General for Scotland said: "Scotland's prisons are running well over operating capacity. The Scottish Prison Service faces a combination of severe pressures on many fronts; this poses a threat to operational safety, effectiveness and financial sustainability."

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Notes to editors

1. This is a section 22 report which allows the Auditor General to bring attention to Parliament and the public matters of wider interest arising from the annual accounts of public bodies. The report is available here ([link to website](#)) and is based on the 2018/19 audit and annual accounts of the Scottish Prison Service.

3. Scotland already has one of the highest imprisonment rates in Europe. The SPS maintains a regularly [updated analysis](#) of prisoner numbers.

3. Audit Scotland has prepared this report for the Auditor General for Scotland. All Audit Scotland reports published since 2000 are available at www.audit-scotland.gov.uk

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