

PAROLE BOARD FOR SCOTLAND



GUIDANCE FOR MEMBERS

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Section 1 Introduction

Date of last review	28 March 2025
Next scheduled review	28 March 2027

1.1 Purposes of the Guidance

1.1.1 The Parole Board for Scotland Guidance for Members (the Guidance) provides the Board and Parole Scotland with a flexible, compact and up to date source of reference material on procedure and practice. New Board members will find core information and links to other sources of information which will support their induction into the role.

1.2 Sources of material

1.2.1 The contents of the Guidance draw upon the accumulated experience and development of the Parole Board for Scotland over many years. The emphasis is on the Board's most recent development and its current operation under the Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Act 1993 (the 1993 Act) as well as relevant case law. The 1993 Act can be found [here](#). The incorporation of the ECHR into Scots' Law added a further dimension and source of material.

1.2.2 The Management of Offenders (Scotland) Act 2019 received Royal Assent on 30 July 2019. The provisions that directly affect the Board are incorporated into the Guidance.

1.2.3 This guidance also takes into account the changes in procedure introduced by the Parole Board (Scotland) Rules 2022 (the Rules) which came into force on 1 April 2023.

1.2.4 The Guidance has been compiled for the benefit of individual Board members and to assist the Board with understanding individual and corporate roles and responsibilities. Sections are arranged as self-standing items of guidance and annexes rather than as a complete manual. Arrangements are in place to update as

required when legislation or practice changes, and for a scheduled review every two years.

Section 2 Origins and objectives of parole

Date of last review	28 March 2025
Next scheduled review	28 March 2027

2.1 The introduction and development of a parole system: the Parole Board for Scotland

2.1.1 A formally structured parole scheme was first advocated in 1964 with the publication of "Crime - a challenge to us all" (Lord Longford). A summary can be found [here](#). In 1968 a system of parole was superimposed on the existing remission system by virtue of the Criminal Justice Act 1967 Pt III. The Parole Board for Scotland was constituted by section 59(1) and Schedule 2 of the Criminal Justice Act 1967. The Board's role was to advise the Secretary of State for Scotland on the early release on licence and recall of prisoners in terms of that Act. This was a paper exercise. This new executive form of release from the sentence imposed by the courts was based on the concept of rehabilitation and the view that prisoners are more likely to become law-abiding citizens if they are released into the community on supervision before completing the whole of their sentence. The parole system introduced in 1968 was influenced by parole systems in other countries, particularly the USA. There were also some influences existing within the British penal system related to executive early release from some categories of sentence e.g. borstal training, the release on life licence of life sentence prisoners, and the practice of granting remission. These practices had amounted to a modification of the sentence imposed by the courts, a matter that previously could only be interfered with through the Royal Prerogative of Mercy.

2.1.2 In 1988 the Carlisle Committee carried out a review of the parole system in England and Wales. The reformed system that emerged there was accompanied by the explicit expectation of an increased parole rate. Risk factors would be balanced by the narrower "parole window" (that is increasing the period in custody before parole could be considered from 1/3rd of the sentence to the halfway point), better facilities for preparing prisoners for release, and increased resources for supervision and monitoring after release. A similar review of the Scottish system was carried out by a

committee under the chairmanship of Lord Kincaig and a report "Parole and Related Issues in Scotland" was published in 1989. The Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Act 1993 (the "1993 Act") implemented the Government's conclusions after consideration of the Kincaig Report. The effective date of implementation was 1 October 1993. Section 20(1) of the 1993 Act provided that there should continue to be a body known as the Parole Board for Scotland to discharge the functions set out in the 1993 Act.

Section 3 Principles of parole

Date of last review	28 March 2025
Next scheduled review	28 March 2027

3.1 Principles of Parole

3.1.1 Parole offers significant benefits to the criminal justice system. It enables people to be released from prison when it is considered that the risk they pose can be safely managed in the community and they are assessed as unlikely to commit further offences or cause harm to another person. Under proper supervision and subject to recall if anything goes wrong while in the community, the released person can continue to address issues which have led to offending in the past. Public safety is the Board's main concern and the best way to maximise this is for prisoners to be returned to the community in a managed way. The parole system can provide an incentive to people in prison to address their risk factors and to plan their return to the community. Early release can assist effective re-settlement by continuing offence-focused work in the community and by accessing the available support networks to support an offence-free lifestyle.

3.2 The current approach

3.2.1 Since the 1993 Act came into force more than 10 statutes have impacted directly on the Board's functions and roles. The Board has a number of statutory functions, largely set out under the 1993 Act and the Management of Offenders etc. (Scotland) Act 2005. A significant watershed was the Convention Rights (Compliance) (Scotland) Act 2001 (the 2001 Act). Until then the Board carried out an advisory role as a paper exercise. In effect, the Board became a decision-making body and the Scottish Ministers/executive were/was required to give effect to its decisions rather than viewing them as recommendations which could be accepted or rejected. The 2001 Act amended the 1993 Act and radically altered the system of parole in Scotland.

3.2.2 Part 1 of the 2001 Act introduced new release arrangements for life prisoners, augmented the role of the Board and ensured compliance with certain decisions of the European Court of Human Rights ("ECtHR").

3.2.3 Part 2 of the 2001 Act reformed the constitution of the Board, created rule-making powers and established a system of tribunals and security of tenure of Board members that was compliant with Article 6 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (“the Convention”). The Parole Board (Scotland) Rules 2022 (SSI 2022/385 - the 2022 Rules) make provision with respect to the proceedings of the Board

3.2.4 Like Parole Boards and their equivalents in New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, the United States, Canada, Jersey, Guernsey, the Isle of Man, Northern Ireland, Ireland, England and Wales, and most members of the Council of Europe, the Board is independent of the country’s court system.

3.2.5 Scottish Ministers have confirmed that they consider that the Board and panels of the Board operate as courts for the purposes of Articles 5(4) and 6(1) of the European Convention on Human Rights. They are not “courts” in the conventional sense of bodies which adjudicate between parties who are in dispute or preside over criminal trials or civil proofs. Their role is at least partly inquisitorial in nature. It is not the responsibility of the Board to consider questions of punishment and general deterrence. These issues are matters for the sentencing court.

3.2.6 The Board and oral hearings of the Board are not “courts” for any of the purposes of the Judiciary and Courts (Scotland) Act 2008 (the 2008 Act) and in particular are not listed as a court in Section 2 of the Act “Head of the Scottish Judiciary”, subsection (6). However, appointments to the Board are overseen by the Judicial Appointments Board for Scotland as set out in section 10(1)(fzc) of the 2008 Act.

3.2.7 The Board only grants release in cases where the level and nature of risk is manageable; this decision is informed by the evaluation of risk. The Board’s main aim is to ensure that the risk posed by a prisoner, if released, can be safely managed in the community. If released, the prisoner will serve the remainder of their sentence in the community under the supervision of a social worker, and subject to consideration of recall to custody if the licence conditions are breached.

Section 4 The Parole Board for Scotland

Date of last review	28 March 2025
Next scheduled review	28 March 2027

4.1 Duties and responsibilities

4.1.1 The Board is a Tribunal Non-Departmental Public Body that operates independently from the Scottish Ministers. Members are expected to act in accordance with the Board’s “Statement of principles of ethics and behaviours for members of the Parole Board for Scotland”, which can be found [here](#).

4.2 Accountability

4.2.1 Decisions and recommendations made by the Board must be supported by reasons and may be the subject of judicial review. The Board is required by law to submit an Annual Report to Scottish Ministers who present it to the Scottish Parliament. The Board’s Corporate Plan assists with the ongoing management and development of the Board in relation to the Board’s values, objectives, workload and meeting key performance targets. Parole policy is a matter for Scottish Ministers who will normally consult with the Board on any changes. The Board may commission research into how it functions with a view to enhancing procedure and practice. The corporate governance of the Board is supported by a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) between the Chair of the Board and Scottish Ministers. This MoA provides for a Parole Scotland Management Board (PSMB) to support the Chairperson in the corporate management of the Board. The Board’s Corporate Plan, Annual Report, MoA and standing orders for PSMB are available through the “Publications” section of the Board’s [website](#). With some exceptions that are noted in the MoA, the Scottish Government’s internal auditors may request access to documents and records held by Parole Scotland which relate to financial management and operational efficiency issues.

4.2.2 Relations with the Scottish Ministers are regulated by the MoA which includes reference to governance processes. There is, however, no statutory basis for the governance arrangements. This issue has been recognised by Scottish Ministers and

there is provision in the Management of Offenders (Scotland) Act 2019 for Scottish Ministers to make Regulations in this respect. The Board awaits confirmation as to when these Regulations will be made and will seek to be involved in their drafting.

4.3 Membership

4.3.1 The composition of the Board is governed by Schedule 2 of the 1993 Act which is available in the [portal](#). Members are appointed through a process of application and selection. The appointment is to last a period of five years. A person who has been a member is eligible for appointment on a subsequent occasion. A member may resign at any time and an appointment cannot extend beyond the age of 75 years. Removal from office can be for unfitness due to inability, neglect of duty or misbehaviour. A Tribunal would be convened to consider removal of a member (further details can be found in Schedule 2 to the 1993 Act).

4.4 Induction, training & development

4.4.1 New members receive structured support during the initial stages of appointment. An initial mandatory training event provides an introduction to parole, the relevant legislation and an explanation of how the Board discharges its functions. Detail will be provided on the oral hearing and casework procedures and the supporting paperwork including dossiers and decision minutes.

4.4.2 Following the training event, new members will observe casework meetings and oral hearings where they will not be involved in decision making. New members will receive training in Victim Interviews prior to meeting victims and families.

4.4.3 All members receive training and development in relation to issues having an impact on the work of the Board. Members are expected to be available for regular training throughout the year for which advance notice will be provided.

4.4.4 Members are required to complete some mandatory on-line training in relation to data protection and IT security.

4.4.5 The work of the PBS and its members is subject to regular assessment. Members participate in a formal review system as part of their ongoing appointment.

4.5 The Scottish Prison Service

4.5. 1. The Scottish Prison Service should manage long-term and indeterminate sentence prisoners in a way that offers them the potential to maximise opportunities to progress and work towards reducing risk up to the point of release. This should be achieved through risk and needs assessment, integrated case management, access to formal education and vocational training, facilities to learn new employment skills, the provision of social work services, and assessment for, and access to, a range of accredited offending-behaviour programmes. Risk is also managed and assessed via graduated access to the community on temporary release licence when a prisoner is located in the National Top End or the Open Estate. Prisoners should also have access to related individual counselling where appropriate. Psychiatric, psychological and addictions expertise should also be available to support these objectives.

4.6 The Risk Management Authority

4.6.1 The Risk Management Authority (RMA) provides guidance and oversight of the risk management plans of those individuals who are subject to an Order for Lifelong Restriction (OLR). The RMA has developed the Framework for Risk Assessment, Management and Evaluation (FRAME) which outlines the agreed policy approach between justice agencies in Scotland to risk assessment and risk management. Four core elements that make up the framework: the foundations, the guidance principles, the language of risk and the practice standards. The [portal](#) contains a link to FRAME.

4.6.2 When a court is considering an OLR sentence, Risk Assessment Reports (RAR) are prepared by the RMA's Accredited Assessors, working to agreed standards. The RMA evaluates every RAR produced.

4.6.3 When an OLR is imposed, the individual will be subject to a Risk Management Plan (RMP) approved by the RMA for the rest of their life. The RMP is prepared by the 'lead authority' responsible for the individual. The lead authority may be the

Scottish Prison Service on behalf of Scottish Ministers, NHS or social work services. The lead authority keeps records of how they are implementing the plan and submits these Annual Implementation Reports (AIR) to the RMA for evaluation. SPS also utilise the RMA to quality assure risk management plans in life sentence cases classed as complex.

4.7 Social work services

4.7.1 The National Outcomes and Standards for Social Work Services in the Criminal Justice System require Social Work Departments to provide services in respect of prisoners while in custody, or while in the community following release on licence. The services after release must include supervision and monitoring and may include facilitating access to employment advice and training resources, and continuing, where necessary, appropriate offending-behaviour work or counselling undertaken in custody.

4.7.2 These services are all valuable in the context of risk assessment and of successful reintegration and rehabilitation on release. For example, it is likely that access to employment will reduce risk by allowing the offender to be economically independent in a social and family context and be a part of the local community. In so far as these matters may operate to reduce risk they are important factors for the Board to consider when making decisions within the range of options currently available in the parole system.

4.8 Police Scotland

4.8.1 Police Scotland (officially the Police Service of Scotland) was established on 1 April 2013 and is the second largest force in the UK after the Metropolitan Police. It took over the responsibilities of seven regional police forces and several national specialist units.

4.8.2 Police Scotland and its predecessors are at the heart of the Board's work. The police force identifies criminality and provides evidence to COPFS to enable

appropriate prosecution to take place. Although most of the work of Police Scotland is at arm's length from the work of the Board there are a number of areas where members depend upon police information and evidence:

- i. Information relating to the index offence which has not been included in the dossier, but appears to the panel to be relevant to the consideration of risk,
- ii. Investigations which are pending when a casework meeting or oral hearing is scheduled; these investigations may relate to events within custody or to behaviour in the community before or after the index offence,
- iii. Information provided to the Scottish Ministers or to a supervising officer suggesting a prisoner on licence has breached their licence conditions,
- iv. Information stemming from the role of the police in supervising, jointly, prisoners subject to a Sexual Offences Prevention Order,
- v. Information relating to the supervision of a prisoner subject to Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA),
- vi. Information relating to victims of the index offence and how their interests can best be managed.

4.8.3 The Board may also seek and receive information from the other UK police forces.

4.9 The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS)

4.9.1 The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) is Scotland's public prosecution service and death investigation authority. When a crime is reported, the police or other reporting agency carry out an initial investigation and if there is enough evidence, a report may be submitted to COPFS for consideration. A procurator fiscal (PF), will assess the evidence and decide what action to take, if any, in the public interest. If the PF decides that court proceedings are appropriate, they will decide what court should deal with the case. The PF will prepare the indictment which sets out the charges which the accused will face and will agree any amendments to the indictment before or during the proceedings. As with Police Scotland most of the work of COPFS is usually at arm's length from that of the Board but there are a number of issues which may result in a panel seeking clarification or additional information from COPFS:

- i. Confirmation of action, if any, being taken in relation to reports of offences in-custody which may have been subject to SPS action,
- ii. Clarification of the action being taken in relation to a pending case and the likely timescale for proceedings (note that there is sometimes confusion over case numbering and that the SCRO record is often not a good guide),
- iii. Information on charges dropped from indictments (although the accused may not have been found guilty the context of the charges and what led to the outcome of the case may be relevant to the consideration of risk)

4.10 The Scottish Ministers / Scottish Government Justice Directorate

4.10.1 “The Scottish Ministers” is the term used to denote the Scottish Government, particularly in relation to the terms of the Parole Board (Scotland) Rules 2022 (the Rules), and elsewhere. The functions of the Scottish Ministers in relation to parole matters is normally carried out by officials of the Justice Directorate.

Section 5 The current approach

Date of last review	18 June 2025
Next scheduled review	18 June 2027

5.1 The role of the Board

5.1.1 As a consequence of legislation introduced to ensure compliance with Article 6 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (“the Convention”), the Board was reformed into a Tribunal Non-departmental Public Body. The Board is an independent, judicial body the members of which hold judicial office independent of Scottish Ministers, and which acts as a Court. The Board can only consider cases referred to it by Scottish Ministers. Scottish Ministers are, in terms of the Rules, a party to all cases referred by them to the Board. The “person concerned” is the other party.

5.1.2 The Board only grants release in cases where the level and nature of risk is manageable. This decision is informed by oral or written evidence in the form of witness evidence and, usually, reports contained in the Scottish Ministers’ dossiers as set out in rule 5. The content of the dossier referred to the Board by Scottish Ministers includes, as far as practicable and relevant, the information and documents listed in the schedule 1 to the Rules. The Board is keen, as part of its commitment to continuous improvement, to continue engaging with Scottish Ministers around whether this approach provides the best and most timely information.

5.1.3 The tests which the Board and its panels apply in making release decisions are many and complex. Release of life prisoners and some extended sentence prisoners are covered by statutory tests while all others are non-statutory tests, which have not been tested in court.

5.1.5 The Board’s supporting administrative body, Parole Scotland, comprises civil servants recruited from the wider civil service in Scotland; they remain Scottish Government employees. Parole Scotland occupies Scottish Government premises.

The Board has no independent budget but receives funding from the Justice Directorate budget monitored by Justice Directorate civil servants. The Board is also required to rely on the Scottish Government for provision and maintenance of Information Technology systems. As the complexity and scope of the Board's work continues to grow we will continue to discuss whether these arrangements remain proportionate and appropriate given the need to maintain judicial independence.

Section 6 Types of Sentence and procedures for consideration

Date of last review	6 January 2026
Next scheduled review	6 January 2028

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 The type of sentence imposed will determine both at which point in the sentence the Board will consider release, and under what procedures the review will take place. Annex 1 sets out the role of the Board in each case, sentence calculations and the timescales for review or automatic release. Annex 8 sets out the separate considerations for prisoners serving sentences for terrorism offences including the test for release.

Short Term Determinate Sentence Prisoners

6.1.2 For prisoners sentenced to a determinate sentence of less than four years, the Board has no role in determining whether or not individuals are released into the community and they will be unconditionally released after serving 40% of their sentence (see section 1(1) of the 1993 Act).

Life sentence prisoners

6.1.3 Life sentence prisoners are reviewed at the end of the punishment part of their sentence, for possible release on life licence by a panel of the Board, at an oral hearing (sitting as a Life Prisoner oral hearing). This is chaired by a legally qualified member of the Board and two other Board members at which the prisoner and his legal representative are present.

6.1.4 It is for the panel to determine if the prisoner should continue to be confined for the protection of the public. If release on life licence is not directed then the panel must fix the review period, which is the point at which the Board will next consider the prisoner's case. The period must be no longer than two years after the date of the decision to decline to direct release.

Orders for Lifelong Restriction prisoners (OLRs)

6.1.5 The release arrangements for OLR prisoners are the same as life sentence prisoners which is that they are referred to the Board for consideration on the expiry of the punishment part of their sentence. The panel is required to have regard to the most recent Risk Management Plan which has been approved by the Risk Management Authority.

Extended sentence prisoners

6.1.6 The Board will deal with extended sentence prisoners in one of two ways. When a short custodial term is imposed, but when taken with the extension period the total sentence is four years or more, the Board's role is to recommend licence conditions before release at their EDL. If the custodial term is four years or more, the Board deals with these cases as for long term determinate sentence prisoners. All extended sentence prisoners released on licence are subject to consideration of recall for the total remaining period of the extended sentence (that is, the custodial term and the extension period).

6.1.7 When Short Term Extended Sentence (STES) prisoners are released on licence, licence conditions are set by the Parole Unit of the Scottish Prison Service on behalf of Scottish Ministers. An STES is one where the total sentence is less than four years.

Long Term Determinate Sentence Prisoners

6.1.8 For offenders sentenced to determinate sentences of four years or more, the Board recommends to Scottish Ministers whether the individual offender should be released on licence at the half-way point of their sentence (the Parole Qualifying Date) (see section 1(3) of the 1993 Act). The Board's recommendation is binding on Scottish Ministers. If early release is not recommended at the first review then the Board will reconsider the offender's case at least every 12 months, or such shorter review period as the Board has set until the offender reaches their Earliest Date of Liberation (EDL), at which point the Scottish Ministers are statutorily required to release the prisoner into

the community on licence. A prisoner's EDL is the two thirds point of their sentence or 6 months before the expiry of the sentence, depending on when they were sentenced (See section 20 of this guidance).

Short Term Sex Offenders

6.1.9 When Short Term Sex Offenders (STSO) (see section 1AA of the 1993 Act) are released on licence, licence conditions are set by the Parole Unit of the Scottish Prison Service on behalf of Scottish Ministers. The Board's involvement in these cases is only to consider grounds for recall to custody or re-release as appropriate.

Children and Young People

6.1.10 Statute requires that all Children and Young People (C&YP) sentenced to detention under Section 208 of the Criminal Procedure Act 1995 must be treated in the same way as long-term adults. This means that the Board is responsible for considering the early release of C&YP sentenced to four years or more detention, and for setting licence conditions for all C&YP sentenced to less than four years detention. C&YP on licence are liable to be recalled to custody in the same way as long-term adults. Scottish Ministers are able to refer the case of a C&YP at any time and are not bound by parole qualifying dates.

6.2 Tests for release

6.2.1 There are specific tests set out in legislation for the release of indeterminate sentence prisoners (Life, Order for Lifelong Restriction or extended sentence prisoners in the extension period).

Indeterminate oral hearing wording of tests and decisions

6.2.2 Sections of the Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Act 1993 as amended are referred to in each case.

i. **Life or OLR Sentence Prisoner Oral Hearings** (section 2(5))

Test

Before it can direct release the panel must be satisfied that it is no longer necessary for the protection of the public that X should be confined.

Decision

The panel is not satisfied on this matter and, it does not direct release. The decision of the panel is by a majority / unanimous. The next review should take place X months from the date of consideration.

OR

The panel is satisfied on this matter, and directs release subject to the licence conditions previously intimated. The decision of the panel is by a majority / unanimous.

ii. **Extended Sentence Prisoner Oral Hearings** (section 3A(4) and R (Sim) v Parole Board [2004])

Test

The panel has to consider whether it is necessary for the protection of the public from serious harm that X should be confined.

Decision

The panel is satisfied on this matter and does not direct release. The decision of the panel is by a majority / unanimous. The next review should take place X months from the date of consideration.

OR

The panel is not satisfied on this matter, and directs release, subject to the licence conditions previously intimated.

iii **Re-Release of ESPs in their custodial part** (section 3A(4) or section 17(3))

Test

The panel has to consider whether it is necessary for the protection of the public from serious harm that X be confined.

Decision

The panel is satisfied on this matter and does not direct release.

OR

The panel is not satisfied on this matter and directs release subject to the attached licence conditions.

Determinate cases and extended sentence cases not previously released on licence

6.2.3 There are no statutory tests for other types of sentences. The Board has adopted the following test: *‘The panel must be satisfied that such risk as the prisoner poses can be managed safely in the community.’*

- i. **PQD or subsequent review for determinate release** (including ESPs in the custodial part) (section 1(3))

Test

The panel must be satisfied that such risk as X poses can be managed safely in the community.

Decision

The panel is satisfied on this matter and recommends release subject to the attached licence conditions.

- ii. **PQD or subsequent review determinate refusal** (including ESPs in the custodial part) (section 1(3))

Test

The panel must be satisfied that such risk as X poses can be managed safely in the community.

Decision

The panel is not satisfied on this matter and does not recommend release. The next review should take place X months from the date of consideration.

OR

There should be no further review prior to release at the Earliest Date of Liberation, for which recommended licence conditions are attached.

OR

Scottish Ministers should refer the case to the Board ten weeks prior to the Earliest Date of Liberation, for a recommendation on licence conditions.

iii. **Recalls (including Indeterminate Sentence Prisoners and Extended Sentence Prisoners (ESPs))** (section 17(1)(b)(i))

Test

The panel must be satisfied that such risk as X poses can be managed safely in the community.

Decision

The panel is not satisfied on this matter and recommends revocation of the licence and immediate recall to custody.

OR

The panel is satisfied on this matter, and recommends that no action be taken.

OR

The panel is satisfied on this matter, subject to a warning letter being issued.

iv. **Determinate re-release** (section 17(4))

Test

The panel must be satisfied that such risk as X poses can be managed safely in the community.

Decision

The panel is satisfied on this matter and directs release on licence subject to the attached licence conditions.

OR

The panel is not satisfied on this matter and does not direct release.

6.3 Licence conditions only (section 12(3))

6.3.1 The test in cases where licence conditions are to be set is as follows:

Test

The panel must be satisfied that recommended licence conditions are lawful, necessary and proportionate in order to manage safely such risk as X poses in the community.

Decision

The panel is satisfied on this matter, and recommends the attached licence conditions.

Section 7 Dossiers and their consideration

Date of last review	2 May 2025
Next scheduled review	2 May 2027

7.1 Role of the Scottish Ministers

7.1.1 “The Scottish Ministers” is the term used throughout Parole Board (Scotland) Rules 2022 (the Rules) and elsewhere, to denote the Scottish Government. The functions of the Scottish Ministers in relation to parole matters is normally carried out by officials of the Justice Directorate. Rule 5 requires the Scottish Ministers to send to the Board and to the “person concerned” (that is, the prisoner/patient), as far as practicable, and relevant to the case, dossiers containing information and documents listed in Schedule 1 to the Rules. However, the review and preparation of a dossier is normally carried out by SPS parole officers working in the prison where the prisoner is located or by relevant staff if the patient is located in a hospital. When a prisoner moves establishment around the time of preparation of the dossier, the dossier may be out of date and members should be alert to the current position.

7.1.2 Although the contents of the dossier are summarised in Schedule 1 to the Rules, the Schedule does not fully cover the all the information normally provided. The detailed approach to the preparation of dossiers is set out in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) “Agreement for the provision of parole services” signed by SPS and PBS in June 2020. Appendix A of the MoU sets out the content of the dossier in detail. Appendix C is an example of a dossier content page. The MoU also covers other matters such as access to prisons, and accommodation matters. Note that at present the MoU refers, in relation to Part B3 of the dossier, to the Response in Custody Report and the ERLO/LLO overview, but these have now been combined into a single form, the “Custody report”. At present there are occasional inconsistencies in the different forms used in the dossier, largely as a result of COVID 19-related changes, and work will continue to make the approach to dossiers more consistent and in line both with Schedule 1 to the Rules, and the MoU.

7.1.3 Referral by Ministers to the Board can be triggered by prisoners or patients becoming eligible for consideration of release on licence; the need to recommend licence conditions where statutory release is upcoming; breaches of the release licence; proposed amendments to licence conditions; and a range of other relevant considerations. The remainder of this section will refer to the “person concerned” as “the prisoner” and these references should be considered as applying equally to patients at the State Hospital or other secure facility. Once the dossier has been prepared it is sent electronically to the Board and a copy given to the prisoner. The prisoner is given four weeks from the date of issue of the dossier to submit representations. The referral papers sent to the Board will provide any additional background to the particular case and specify in the dossier cover note what the Board is being asked to decide and/or recommend.

7.1.4 It is worth noting that determinate cases are usually referred in advance of the Parole Qualifying Date (PQD). As well as allowing the Board to consider suitability for release, this also lets SPS consider whether to allow the prisoner to be released on Home Detention Curfew (HDC) prior to release at the PQD.

7.2 The dossier - a general outline

7.2.1 At initial referral the dossier cover note must as far as practicable contain the prisoner's full name and date of birth, prison number, and current sentence(s). Any significant dates including where applicable the parole qualifying date, the earliest date of liberation, licence and sentence end dates, must also be included in the cover note. Schedule 1 to the Rules also requires that details of any other places where the prisoner has been detained should be provided in the cover note, but at present this is normally included in the Custody Report later in the dossier. An example copy of a cover note is available on the [portal](#).

7.2.2 The dossier will also include pages setting out any pending cases and previous convictions of the prisoner. Such records may come from a variety of sources and it is important to check that the circumstances set out in the dossier align with the record of previous convictions, particularly in any pending cases. There can often be

problems in securing previous conviction information from other UK jurisdictions. Members should be prepared to question any inconsistencies or gaps in the record.

7.2.3 Although it is not a specific requirement of Schedule 1 (but is required by the MoU), it is important that the indictment served on the prisoner in relation to the index offence is included in the dossier. A report from the trial judge should be provided in any indeterminate case or where at a single court hearing a long-term sentence was imposed. On occasion prisoners have accumulated a number of short sentences which add up to a long-term sentence; in such cases a trial judge report will not normally be available. In the case of older life sentence cases, where the index conviction predates the completion of trial judge reports, the dossier may contain a Note of Circumstances outlining the facts of the case. The dossier will normally also contain any reports, whether from social work, psychiatrists or others, completed at the time of the index offence to inform the sentencing decision.

7.2.4 The dossier also contains a custody report from the prisoner's personal officer, Life Liaison officer (LLO) or Early Release Liaison Officer (ERLO) countersigned by the hall manager, which covers conduct in custody, including engagement with prison activities such as work and education, any misconduct reports which the prisoner has incurred, and any offending behaviour programmes completed or proposed. It will identify any further work considered necessary and indicate the proposed management plan for the prisoner in the event that release is not directed. It will not express any views on the advisability of release.

7.2.5 It will contain a report indicating whether there is any intelligence on the prisoner and if there is negative intelligence on the prisoner it will give an outline of that intelligence and of its assessed reliability. It will also contain a healthcare report from NHS Scotland (NHS Scotland is responsible for health care in prisons in Scotland). It also contains social work reports normally in the form of the throughcare assessment for release on licence (TARL). The TARL is a single report jointly prepared by the prison based and community based social workers. In some instances, separate social work reports will be provided by the prison based social worker and the community based social worker. The dossier will also include representations or other

information submitted by the prisoner or by a solicitor on their behalf. The dossier may contain representations from a victim or victims.

7.2.6 If the prisoner is subject to an Order for Lifelong Restriction, the dossier will contain a Risk Management Plan (RMP) approved by the Risk Management Authority (RMA). It will also include the Annual Implementation Report (AIR) which the Lead Authority (in this case SPS) is required to submit to the RMA on its delivery of the plan. It should be noted that section 26B of the Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Act 1993 specifically requires the Board, whenever it is considering the case of a person in respect of whom there is an RMP, to have regard to the plan. If there is such a plan, it would not be competent to proceed without sight of it. When a short punishment part has been imposed an RMP and AIR may not be available when the case first comes before the Board.

7.2.7 The dossier will also include records of the Board's previous consideration of the case in the form of minutes or letters summarising the evidence considered and the conclusion reached. It will include the set of custody and social work reports provided for the previous consideration, if applicable. The dossier may also contain a variety of other reports and information. The most notable examples are psychiatric reports, psychological reports and reports from specialist counsellors.

7.2.8 Once the dossier has been referred by SPS to the Board it is a matter for the Board to receive any representations or other information the prisoner wishes the Board to take into account. Examination of the dossier may disclose that information or a report relevant to risk assessment is missing. Board members should always be alert to the requirement for the prisoner to receive and be able to respond to any new information obtained directly by the Board after the dossier has been issued. The detail of these matters is covered in the Parole Board (Scotland) Rules 2022 which are available through the [portal](#).

7.3 Children and young person's cases

7.3.1 In the case of children and young persons sentenced to a determinate period of detention, the dossier will contain a variety of reports covering the core issues

described above but with a stronger emphasis on the child's particular circumstances. For example, there will be a greater emphasis on the child's response to education during detention. Although indeterminate sentences are applied to children and young persons, it is unlikely that the relevant punishment part will have been completed while they were still considered to be a child or young person.

7.4 Patients in hospital

7.4.1 In the case of prisoners who are detained patients under mental health legislation the dossier may contain a mixture of prison and hospital reports. The weight and emphasis of the latter reports may have a direct bearing to the length of the detention in hospital by the time of referral. There will usually be a report from the Responsible Medical Officer (RMO), and details of any transfer for treatment direction as well as reports from the hospital social worker and the mental health officer. Often, the medical reports in such cases will be formulated to address the criteria for a Compulsory Treatment Order rather than the Board's tests for release, and the panel will have to be mindful of this and apply the correct test.

7.5 Consideration of recall and re-release dossiers

7.5.1 In grounds for recall referrals the dossier will normally comprise the documents outlined at para 7.2.1 above, a copy of the licence conditions and the Throughcare Licence Breach Report (TLBR). The dossier will also include records of the Board's previous considerations of the case together with the reports provided for the last consideration. The TLBR will usually relate to concerns about the licensee's conduct and response to supervision while on licence and details of any new criminal conduct, alleged or otherwise. Any Police Scotland reports relating to the conduct should also be included.

7.5.2 After recall and before consideration of re-release the prisoner is entitled to submit representations about their recall. If provided, such representations will be included in the re-release dossier. The re-release dossier will include the minute of the meeting which recommended recall, as well as the basic information available to the members who recommended recall. It may also include information from the

prisoner's solicitor on the status of any outstanding charges and a report from the prison now holding the individual concerned. In indeterminate oral hearing cases for re-release consideration, the dossier will contain the full suite of reports expected in Schedule 1 and the MoU with SPS.

7.5.3 In the cases of extended and determinate sentence prisoners recalled from licence, their earliest date of liberation flies off and their next automatic release date is their sentence end date. Any period where the prisoner is considered to be unlawfully at large is added to the sentence calculation and will change the sentence end date.

7.6 Matters to be taken into account by panel in making a decision

7.6.1 Rules 11 and 12 specify the matters that may be taken into account by the panel in making its decision. In practical terms the panel may take into account any matter which it considers to be relevant. Specifically this includes the nature and circumstances of any offences of which the person has been convicted; the person's conduct in custody; the risk of re-offending or causing harm (harm is not defined) if released on licence; the person's intentions if released on licence and their likelihood of fulfilling those intentions; and the effect on the safety or security of any other person, including in particular any victim or family member of a victim, or any family member of the prisoner.

7.6.2 Rule 12 is specifically directed towards the circumstances where the prisoner has not disclosed information about where or how the victim's remains were disposed of, and enables the panel to take this matter into account when considering the case.

7.6.3 Where a panel of the Board is unable to reach a decision on the level of risk or for other reasons, it may defer or adjourn for further information (and see Section 8.1 for more general guidance on deferral/adjournment). Therefore, it is open to the re-convened panel to revisit the issue of risk, especially in light of the new information that has come to hand. The Board's duty is to form a judgement on the reports in the dossier and any other information obtained, consider the evidence and decide on the acceptability of risk for release or otherwise. The Board is not bound by any of the

individual risk assessments before it but the reasons for its own assessment of risk should be clearly set out in the reasons given for its decision. The panel makes a decision in relation to public protection, on the basis of assessment of risk. Part of the panel's role is to identify where information may be missing, or incomplete. This is vital where the missing or incomplete information may be material to the assessment of risk.

7.7 Non-disclosure of information: “damaging information”

7.7.1 Rule 9 provides for circumstances where information on the prisoner may not be disclosed to the prisoner on one or more of the specified grounds that it would be considered "damaging" to do so. This information can take any form but is usually in the form of a non-disclosure intelligence report, which cannot be included in the dossier. In these circumstances the prisoner must be sent a written notice informing them that certain information has not been sent to them because it is “damaging” and giving the reason for this, so far as is practicable without prejudicing that reason. The possible reasons defined in rule 9 are that the information would be likely to adversely affect the health or welfare of any person; result in the commission of an offence; facilitate an escape or other act prejudicial to legal custody; impede the prevention or detection of offences or the apprehension or prosecution of offenders; have an adverse effect on national security; or damage the public interest. The Board may take into account any damaging information not disclosed to the prisoner.

7.7.2 The Board has produced additional guidance at Annex 3 specifically covering its approach to damaging information withheld from the prisoner.

Section 8 Role of the Board

Date of last review	2 May 2025
Next scheduled review	2 May 2027

8.1 Role of the Board after referral

8.1.1 After referral of the dossier the Board is required to deal with any further procedural matters such as allocating the case to a casework meeting or arranging an oral hearing. The Board will often receive updated reports and representations or other information from the prisoner, prior to the case being considered. Additional papers will be added to the dossier.

8.1.2 A panel of the Board should not defer nor adjourn consideration of a case unless it is clear that a decision cannot properly be made without potentially prejudicing the interests of fairness and justice in respect of the prisoner and/or public safety. The panel should be mindful of the requirement for procedural fairness and should not normally decide to adjourn an oral hearing or a casework panel without taking the views of the prisoner or his solicitor on such an adjournment.

8.1.3 A decision to defer or adjourn for further information should not be made to obtain information that will only become available at some unspecified point in the future. On occasion, however, reports before the panel are unclear or lack key information required (for example, on the detail of the management plan on release). In such cases it may be appropriate to defer to secure more robust information. Decisions to defer or adjourn should not be made lightly but must always be made with fairness in mind.

8.1.4 A reasonable ground for deferring is that the time for receipt of representations will not have elapsed when the case is scheduled to come before the panel for consideration. Another ground for deferring or adjourning is that there is additional relevant information in the form of existing reports or documents which should have been made available to the panel but have not been. If release plans, the reported outcome of offending behaviour work or counselling, or psychological risk

assessments are imminent but not available for the scheduled date, then it may be appropriate to defer the hearing for these to be produced.

8.1.5 Where consideration is being given to seeking new information, account should be taken of all factors. This includes the general requirement for the prisoner to see the information and submit representations and the need to ensure prisoners are not unnecessarily detained in custody. While the Board has inquisitorial duties, it has no powers to commission reports, but only to require information from professionals such as psychologists, the police or Crown or to cite witnesses and question them by way of investigation.

8.1.6 The context of statutory offences mentioned in the dossier, including previous convictions, may not always be immediately obvious. The website legislation.gov.uk can provide the detail of relevant statutory offences through a relatively straightforward search. In the event of doubt, legally qualified members may be able to assist.

8.2 Duty to make enquiries where there are gaps in information

8.2.1 In such cases, it is not appropriate to proceed in the absence of material information. Instead, the panel should consider what enquiries are necessary to obtain the relevant information, and direct that these are made. The panel should specify the information that is required, and who should obtain this information. The panel may wish to make enquiries with bodies such as Scottish Prison Service, Crown Office or the NHS. The panel may require to use its powers in terms of rule 21 (in relation to casework meetings) to request information or documents from any person. In relation to oral hearings, rule 28 enables the panel chairperson to cite witnesses to provide evidence and compel the production of information or documentation. It may be necessary to postpone or adjourn a CWM or oral hearing until this information is available.

8.2.2 In the case of *Worboys* (reported as *The Queen on the application of DSD and NBV & Ors -v- The Parole Board of England and Wales & Ors and John Radford*), the Court upheld the challenge to the decision of the Parole Board of England and Wales on the grounds that the tribunal had not sought further information about offences

which had not resulted in a conviction. The Court said that “*In short, there is no implied limitation on the nature or temporal character of the information the Parole Board may take into account in assessing risk: the only constraint is that the board must act fairly*”.

8.2.3 This necessarily involves a judgement as to the significance and weight to be attached to information, and the importance of recovering it. However, the Board must give priority to its role in safeguarding the public.

8.3 Written Statement of Preparation

8.3.1 In oral hearing cases, rule 31 requires the prisoner or their representative to send the panel a statement indicating the extent to which that person is prepared for the oral hearing. The chairperson of the panel must consider the information contained in the written statement of preparation as soon as practicable after it is received. If necessary, the oral hearing can be postponed to enable the prisoner to be better prepared for the oral hearing

8.4 Adverse developments

8.4.1 An adverse development may have a negative impact on decision making in terms of risk assessment and could include escape, absconding, downgrading, new criminal charges, new misconduct reports or non-availability of essential factors in a release plan such as a release address. Therefore, it is essential that adverse information is taken into account in the decision making process.

8.4.2 In cases where there is to be an oral hearing, adverse information received by the Scottish Ministers before the oral hearing will be referred and sent to panel members. Adverse information can sometimes be made known during the course of the oral hearing and it is good practice to seek an early update of the prisoner's situation.

8.4.3 In all cases the prisoner should be given the opportunity to make representations on the terms of the adverse information or the substance of any

damaging information which has been withheld where the panel are considering attaching weight to it.

8.4.4 If an adverse report is received by the Board without representations on it from the prisoner, the Board may proceed in the absence of representations if it is considered that the adverse information is not significant to its decision. In other cases, where the adverse information suggests an unacceptable risk has emerged, it will be necessary in the interests of fairness to defer the case to allow the prisoner the opportunity to make representations about it.

8.4.5 If the prisoner has already submitted representations, he or she should be advised that further representations may be submitted to the Board in respect of the adverse information within the four week period. This period may be varied under Rule 14(2), although Rule 14(3) requires that if the panel or Board varies the time period it must have regard to the desirability of avoiding unnecessary delay in relation to the case, and the need to ensure fairness to the parties.

8.4.6 Where the adverse development concerns intelligence information, the Board or panel may consider it necessary to obtain details of the quality and reliability of the intelligence information for example where the prisoner disputes the information. The appropriateness of requesting this information will usually be clear from the circumstances and the prisoner's response. Reference should be made to the Board's guidance at section 32 on how to approach Rule 9 information in these circumstances.

8.4.7 Occasionally, the panel or Board may receive an adverse report **after** the decision has been made to release the prisoner. The case of *Dickins* was authority that the Board has no locus to reconsider a decision after it had been intimated to the prisoner. Rule 19 subsequently introduced a power for the chairperson of the Board to reconsider decisions where there has been a procedural or administrative defect, but this excludes decisions to recommend or direct release or re-release. Where the decision to release has been intimated and the adverse report is then received, the Board cannot change its decision. In such circumstances it may be appropriate to provide the adverse report to the community-based social worker, who may proceed as they see fit (including submitting a throughcare breach report if this is felt

appropriate). The decision minute can record the adverse report, but that it was received after the decision to release was intimated.

Section 9 Framework for decision-making

Date of last review	2 May 2025
Next scheduled review	2 May 2027

9.1 Public safety

9.1.1 In assessing the suitability of prisoners for early release on parole or release on a life licence the Board focuses primarily on the risk to the public of a further offence being committed at a time when the prisoner would otherwise be in prison. Closely associated with the risk of re-offending is the potential for risk of harm or serious harm. No direction or recommendation for release should be made if there is an assessed unacceptable risk to the public of a further offence being committed at a time when the prisoner would otherwise be in prison. However, the Board may also balance this risk against the benefit, both to the public and the prisoner, of supervision in the community and the likelihood of this assisting re-integration and rehabilitation and reducing the risk of re-offending. The Board must always be aware that safeguarding the public should outweigh any benefits of release to the prisoner.

9.2 Risk assessment

9.2.1 In making a judgement on a case the Board is making a risk assessment based on all of the information in the dossier including formal and structured risk assessments reported in the dossier that have been based on established and accepted procedures. Social work reports and psychological reports in the dossier should describe in broad terms the risk assessment tools that have been applied in reaching a view on risk. The most common risk assessment tool is the “Level of Service Case Management Inventory” (LSCMI). This measures the risk and need factors of late adolescent and adult offenders. It considers stable and dynamic factors (see section on risk factors below) and combines risk assessment and case management into one evidence-based system. When assessing the risk posed by sex offenders, practitioners mostly use the Risk Matrix 2000 (RM2000) as a screening tool and Stable and Acute 2007 (SA07) to track changes in the risk presented over time. The Board is not obliged to follow the recommendations drawn from formal risk

assessment tools or other evidence but where there is a clear divergence it is necessary to clearly explain why the Board takes a different view.

9.2.2 Risk assessment is a varied and dynamic process that is continually being evaluated, refined and developed to maximise its reliability in identifying, assessing and managing risk effectively. Actuarial methods utilise statistical techniques to generate reliable risk predictors. The downside of this approach can be “statistical fallacy” and the low incidence of risky behaviours in the population as a whole. Although the clinical method is considered less reliable, it can provide important information on an individual’s risky behaviours and environmental stressors as well as in establishing risk management plans. The current approach is leaning towards the significant role that structured clinical judgement, particularly in the form of structured behavioural rating scales, can have as part of actuarially based tools. The combined use of clinical and actuarial methods in a holistic approach is now advocated as the technique most likely to enhance the predictive accuracy and usefulness of risk assessments for example by the MacLean Committee Report on Serious Violent and Sexual Offenders (2000). One of the outcomes of that report was the introduction of legislation that gave judges the power to impose an Order for Lifelong Restriction (OLR), broadly similar to a discretionary life sentence.

9.2.3 Further information on risk management tools can be found in the Risk Management Authority’s Risk Assessment Tools Evaluation Directory (RATED) which is available through the [portal](#).

9.3 Risk factors

9.3.1 Static risk is the risk prisoners represent on the basis of factors they cannot change that is, their history and particularly any criminal history. Dynamic risk relates to variables that can, or could, change over time and include anger, impulsiveness, use of alcohol and/or drugs, literacy and age. Risk assessment has to have regard to both factors and is anchored in static factors. Dynamic factors are then identified, and their significance assessed in reaching a balanced judgement of each prisoner’s circumstances.

9.3.2 Research is continuous in the field of criminal justice and the following information is given by way of example only and should not be regarded as exhaustive. More importantly it should not be considered as directive in any sense since the outcome of research is a generalised position and each case considered by the Board will be susceptible to the introduction of dynamic variables by the time release is being considered.

- i. There may be a strong link between being the subject of physical, sexual or psychological abuse during childhood and general criminality.
- ii. Criminal behaviour and convictions in males under the age of 21 years are associated with an increased risk of re-offending.
- iii. Employment is associated with decreased risk of re-offending.
- iv. Breach of community-based disposals, bail or other court orders could indicate that a person is more likely to re-offend, or less likely to comply with licence conditions.
- v. Where there is a history of violence this could indicate that a person is more likely to engage in future violence.
- vi. Current mental health symptoms (as confirmed by an up-to-date psychiatric report) can be associated with an increase in the risk of offending. However, the psychiatric report should have given a view on the impact that the symptoms may have in relation to the prisoner's release into the community and how any prescribed medication may impact on the symptoms. The Board should not make a licence condition requiring an offender to take medication prescribed for a mental disorder, as it lacks the statutory framework and expertise to do so. However, the Board may wish to consider if there are mechanisms which can ensure that an offender takes medication if it will have an impact on risk, such as a Compulsory Treatment Order (granted by the Mental Health Tribunal for Scotland).

- vii. A pattern of recent escalation in frequency or severity of violence may be associated with imminent risk of violent recidivism.
- viii. Some offenders routinely engage in minimisation and/or denial of anti-social behaviour.

9.4 Denial of guilt

9.4.1 A panel must approach each case on the basis that the prisoner was properly convicted of the offence(s) for which he or she was sentenced. It is not the function of the panel to investigate possible miscarriages of justice or to raise any misgivings about the correctness of a conviction. An important factor is that denial of guilt may operate as a barrier to participating in offending-behaviour programmes or counselling while in custody or in the community after release. Denial of guilt need not be a barrier to participation in sex offender programmes. The matter of denial of guilt has been discussed in two Court of Session Cases – *McBrearty* (in which a full opinion was not issued) and then *Laidlaw* (2007). In the latter case the court observed that the Board members will, in assessing risk, be presumed to have considered *all* relevant factors before coming to their decision, and balance positive and negative factors. If it is clear that this has been done, then the court will be slow to interfere with the panel's discretion.

9.4.2 There is no rule or policy which automatically prevents a prisoner who denies guilt from being released early and legal precedent has established that it would be unlawful for the Board to refuse parole solely on the ground of denial. There is a body of research which tends to suggest that denial, of itself, does not increase risk. However, in terms of risk assessment, particular issues may arise where a prisoner denies guilt, as they often refuse to participate in programmes for addressing offending behaviour. This can lead to lack of information about the motivations for their offending behaviour. Consideration should therefore be given as to whether there is sufficient understanding of a prisoner's triggers and risk factors for an adequate community-facing risk management plan to be formulated and for their risk to be safely managed in the community. As in all cases, a decision must be reached taking into account all the risk and protective factors.

9.5 Offending-behaviour programmes

9.5.1 The SPS has a wide range of accredited offending-behaviour programmes at its disposal and prisoners are assessed according to their criminal history and behaviour and their current conviction(s). The allocation of prisoners to particular programmes is assessed by the Programmes Case Management Board (PCMB) and confirmed by the prison's Risk Management Team (RMT) (and see 6.8.4 below). The outcome of assessment for participation in these programmes, as well as a post-programme report, is frequently reported in dossiers. Ideally the post-programme report will contain information on the topics covered, any progress made and any remaining unmet need. Attendance at an offending-behaviour programme should not be considered an end in itself. Panel members should look for evidence of behaviour change or insight into triggers to offending. It is also helpful if information is provided in the custody report on any changes in behaviour noted following participation in an offending behaviour programme.

9.6 Previous convictions

9.6.1 Where a prisoner has criminal convictions a copy of the record of previous convictions is usually included in the dossier or reported in the Note of Circumstances. Social work reports may provide a summary of the actual circumstances of the most relevant convictions and their association, if any, with addictive behaviours. By and large the information provided is a sufficient basis for understanding a person's criminal history. The following information is provided to enhance the understanding of Board members. Information in the dossier in relation to convictions, or the lack of them, may not always be what it seems.

9.6.2 Because of historical factors a variety of styles of criminal record may appear in dossiers. These vary from lists printed from the SCRO computer to those "typed" in the Procurator Fiscal's office at the time a case is reported by the police for the Fiscal's consideration and where a degree of selection could have been applied. However, the latter style is less frequent nowadays. Some printed records have to be read carefully as the format can result in a misalignment of the columns in the table. It must also be remembered that a conviction list provided with the police report may

have become out of date due to subsequent convictions for other offences outstanding at that time. This can occasionally become apparent where the prison requisitions a convictions list via Scottish Criminal Records Online (SCRO) at the time of instigating preparation of the dossier.

9.6.3 A Police National Computer (PNC) record may also be contained in the dossier. This will include Scottish convictions and may also include convictions elsewhere in the UK. There is a degree of exchange of criminal record information between systems but it is doubtful if there is absolute accuracy.

9.6.4 The SCRO database, the most usual source of conviction information in the dossier, is subject to weeding policies related to the age of the prisoner, the seriousness of the conviction and the time that a conviction has been on the record. In minor convictions the criteria are 40 years of age and the conviction is 20 years old. In serious convictions (includes serious violence and sexual offending) the criteria are 70 years of age and the conviction is 30 years old (the same criteria were applied at the time of converting manual records to computer database prior to going live in 1988). Some records will also, at the beginning of the record, contain details of “pending cases” which indicate that charges may still be live in the Procurator Fiscal’s office. It is important to look out for these as the text in dossiers can sometimes be incomplete or confused about pending cases and some cases included in the “pending” category may have already been dealt with.

9.6.5 Only the most serious disposals from the Children's Hearing are retained beyond 18 years of age.

9.6.6 Not all road traffic convictions are recorded - only the most serious and where there is a broadly similar "common law" equivalent for example, taking a motor vehicle without consent (theft), driving while disqualified (contempt of court) and causing death by dangerous driving (culpable homicide). However, all road traffic offences committed in association with another recordable common law crime or statutory offence will be recorded. This means that a record in the dossier may not include driving offences associated with consumption of alcohol and/or drugs. Most common law offences are self-explanatory, although there may occasionally be more obscure

offences such as “hamesucken” (entering a person’s home to assault them) on schedules of previous convictions.

9.7 Prisoner Supervision System & progression pathway

9.7.1 A Prisoner Supervision System (PSS) was introduced in 2002. This system reflects the amount of supervision a prisoner requires within prison. It is designed to assist with the effective management of prisoners in the context of public safety, the operational needs of the SPS, facilitation of progression, fairness and transparency, and the appropriate allocation of resources.

9.7.2 Prisoners are assigned one of three supervision levels:

- High = an individual for whom all activities and movements require to be authorised, supervised, and monitored by prison staff.
- Medium = an individual for whom activities and movements are subject to locally specified limited supervision and restrictions.
- Low = an individual for whom activities and movements, specified locally, are subject to minimum supervision and restrictions (and could include licence conditions and unsupervised activities in the community).

9.7.3 There is a set of ten assessment criteria applied on admission and subsequently. The process is geared towards eliminating the need for higher supervision levels than are required. Prisoners are provided with reasons for the allocation of any particular supervision level.

9.7.4 The progression pathway for long-term prisoners defines the minimum period to be served in a secure establishment before having supervised or unsupervised access to the community. Determinate sentence prisoners (including those with extended sentences) become eligible for transfer to open conditions when they are within two years of their Parole Qualifying Date (PQD). Life sentence prisoners must have no more than four years to serve before the expiry of the punishment part to become eligible for transfer to national top ends and thereafter to open conditions. Order for Lifelong Restriction (OLR) prisoners must have no more than two years to

serve before the expiry of the punishment part to become eligible for transfer to national top ends and thereafter to open conditions, or for transfer directly to open conditions. Further details about the progression pathway can be found in the document Risk Management, Progression and Temporary Release Guidance which is available through the [portal](#) under SPS information.

9.7.5 The process for assessing a prisoner's required level of supervision dovetails with the Risk Management Team, the Programme Case Management Board (PCMB) and the Integrated Case Management (ICM) process. This provides a cohesive system for assessing risk, managing prisoners through their sentence and addressing identified needs. One outcome is that in closed establishments there will be a high proportion of prisoners allocated a low supervision level.

9.7.6 Panel members must remember that this system is a prison management tool and a prisoner's conduct in custody is only one of many factors that may be taken into account in making a judgement on the acceptability or otherwise of release on licence. For example, early release on parole, or release on life licence, is not an automatic consequence where a prisoner allocated a low supervision level has access to the community through home leaves and/or a work placement following transfer to open conditions (the least restrictive prison regime).

9.7.7 The relationship between security category reviews and panel decision-making has been reviewed in England - *Williams (2002)* - and may usefully be considered in the context of the PSS in Scotland. The relevant part of the judgement states that "[Both] address the same broad issue - public safety - but are resolving a different problem. There is no statutory or other basis for concluding that one decision making body has priority over the other or that the judgement of one is binding on the other. Indeed... it is an inevitable consequence of the two distinct processes, addressing linked but different questions that apparent inconsistencies of decision may occasionally happen". The issue of public safety considered by the prison authorities is the risk to the public posed by an escape.

9.8 Disclosure of information about victims

9.8.1 Rule 12 is specifically directed towards the circumstances where the prisoner has not disclosed information about where or how the victim's remains were disposed of, and enables the panel to take this matter into account when considering the case.

9.9 Lack of co-operation Cases

9.9.1 Cases that may also present difficulties are those where there has been a refusal to co-operate to a greater or lesser extent with the compilation of reports. This may or may not be in conjunction with a denial of responsibility. For example, this situation sometimes occurs in the context of an on-going appeal and the prisoner simply refuses to co-operate in the belief that to do so would prejudice his appeal. Again, each case must turn on its own facts and evidence but the lack of sufficient information of a dynamic nature, such as a release plan, to balance against the indication of risk may be a determinative factor.

9.10 Psychological and Psychiatric assessment and reports

9.10.1 The Board cannot commission psychological or psychiatric assessments. However, the Board can recommend that SPS commission such reports and can cite professional witnesses on such matters. Because the Board is a court, witnesses can be compelled to provide existing reports and answer questions regardless of confidentiality.

9.11 Experience and skills of Board members

9.11.1 Members are encouraged to seek assistance from other Board members, especially those with relevant professional expertise, whenever necessary and this is a proper use of the Board's resources. However, care is needed to confine discussion to only obtaining the required information or interpretation and ensure that discussion does not include the merits of the case. Where a casework meeting is fixing an oral hearing, or a case is to be deferred or adjourned, it may be appropriate to make a

recommendation that a member with a particular skillset (for example, mental health) sits on the rescheduled panel.

Section 10 Life, and Order for Lifelong Restriction prisoners

Date of last review	6 January 2026
Next scheduled review	6 January 2028

10.1 General principles

10.1.1 Life sentences must be imposed for murder. They can also be imposed for other extremely serious offences under a “discretionary life sentence”, although these are far less common since the introduction of orders for lifelong restriction (OLR). The [Scottish Sentencing Council](#) provided the following definition of a life sentence. *“If a person is sentenced to life imprisonment, the judge must, by law, set a punishment part of the sentence. This is the minimum time the person must spend in prison before they can be considered for release into the community by the Parole Board for Scotland. Depending on the circumstances of the case, the punishment part can be lengthy. If a person sentenced to life imprisonment is released into the community, they will be on licence for the rest of their life and can be recalled to prison if they breach the terms of their licence.”* Prisoners subject to an OLR are also defined as life prisoners by Section 2(1) of the 1993 Act. The 1993 Act is available to members through the [Portal](#).

10.1.2 Decisions in the cases of indeterminate sentence prisoners are a matter for an oral hearing panel (the panel) constituted under Part 4 of the Parole Board (Scotland) Rules 2022. The timing of the first oral hearing in a life or OLR sentence prisoner's case is triggered by the expiry of the punishment part set by the trial judge. The punishment part is concerned with retribution and deterrence NOT with the protection of the public, that being the function of the panel.

10.2 Options

10.2.1 The panel has the power to direct release or not as the case may be and from time to time to adjourn a hearing; an adjournment before the oral hearing has commenced, will be referred to as a postponement.

10.2.2 In making a decision the panel applies the test specified by the 1993 Act – It may only direct release when it is satisfied "that it is no longer necessary for the protection of the public that the prisoner should be confined". This test has been the subject of recent judicial scrutiny, and the test has been stated to mean that if the Board is satisfied that the prisoner no longer poses a substantial risk of serious harm, it must release them.

10.2.3 Decisions may be by a majority.

10.3 Re-release considerations

10.3.1 In the case of a recalled indeterminate sentence prisoner any member who participated in the recall decision is precluded by law from taking part in the immediate re-release consideration. For the sake of clarity, this same provision applies in relation to any other prisoner recalled by the Board.

Section 11 Oral hearings & review periods

Date of last review	15 November 2025
Next scheduled review	15 November 2027

11.1 Oral Hearings

11.1.1 Under the Parole Board (Scotland) Rules 2022 cases can be dealt with at a casework meeting “Part 3 cases”, or by way of an oral hearing “Part 4 cases” (life, OLR and ESPs in the extension part of the sentence). Cases which start at a casework meeting move to be dealt with under Part 4 if an oral hearing is fixed. The procedural rules in relation to an oral hearing are the same, irrespective of the type of case or how it got to the oral hearing.

11.2 Procedure at oral hearings

11.2.1 Rule 32 of the Parole Board (Scotland) Rules 2022 sets out the order of proceedings for an oral hearing and the handling of the proceedings. The chair is required to explain the order of proceedings at the beginning of the hearing. The panel is required, as far as possible, to avoid formality in the proceedings. Beyond the requirements of Rule 32, there is no prescribed procedure in the Rules and the Board has adopted a form of procedure that experience shows suits most cases. The Procedure Notes can be found in the [portal](#). However, there is flexibility to adopt any other suitable form of proceedings in any particular case. Rule 23(1) states that subject to the provisions of the 2022 Rules, an oral hearing panel may regulate its own procedure for the purpose of a case to be determined under this Part.

11.2.2 Rule 16 provides that the oral hearing will take place by live link unless the panel decides that it should take place in-person. The Board has taken a policy decision that face-to-face hearings should only be convened where there is a good reason for doing so, where there are barriers to a fair and inclusive process such as a prisoner having hearing difficulties or mental health issues which would make a face-to-face hearing necessary. Where a request for a face-to-face hearing is made by one

of the parties, the panel must give its decision no later than 5 working days before the hearing (although this period can be shortened by agreement of parties or under Rule 14(2)).

11.2.3 Evidence given to the Parole Board is not subject to the normal rules of criminal evidence and the panel may consider and take into account material that would normally be considered inadmissible in criminal proceedings. The Board may consider hearsay evidence. The aim is to provide a forum where everyone can speak candidly about the issues. The fundamental requirement is that the proceedings are fair.

11.2.4 The parties in a case are the Scottish Ministers and the prisoner, and each is entitled to be represented. The prisoner is usually legally represented. Historically Scottish Ministers were represented by their official, a member of the Justice Directorate, who attended along with the Lifer Liaison Officer (LLO) or Early Release Liaison Officer (ERLO) of the establishment where the prisoner is in custody. In recent years Scottish Ministers have chosen not to send an official. However, Scottish Ministers continue to be parties as defined in the Parole Board Rules and retain the right to send an official to an oral hearing.

11.2.5 In advance of the hearing, the members should consider the written evidence and whether witnesses might need to be cited to attend. A Statement of Preparation should be submitted by the prisoner or their solicitor no later than 10 days before the hearing advising on several matters including whether the citation of witnesses is sought. Careful and early consideration should be given to the necessity of social work professionals attending the hearing particularly where reports are clear and concise and reach evidence-based conclusions and recommendations. Social workers should be cited to attend where it is necessary to explore, in detail, the basis for conclusions and recommendations, or where members, having read all the information available to them do not agree with the conclusions and recommendations made. If the panel comes to a different view to those of the professional witnesses, they must make clear within the minute why they rejected the evidence given. Rule 33 (4) specifically requires the panel to explain in its written decision the reasons why its decision differs in any respect from the recommendations in any risk management plan submitted to the Board in respect of an OLR prisoner. Members should note that

the phrase “risk management plan” is sometimes used loosely in documentation, but the phrase is defined in the Rules as applying to OLR prisoners.

11.3. Citing witnesses

11.3.1 Witnesses are cited in terms of Rule 28. This Rule allows other parties to request that a witness is authorised. The party seeking to have a witness cited must provide full details of the reasons for the citation. Where a request for the attendance of a witness is refused then the parties must be given the reasons for this decision. A request should not be granted for a speculative cross examination of a witness. No party can be compelled to give evidence or produce any document that a court of law could not compel them to do so. Where a witness is cited, they should be provided with an explanation as to why they are required and the evidence they are to give. There is no time requirement in relation to citations, but witnesses should be given as much notice as possible. There is a potential criminal sanction if witnesses fail to attend.

11.3.2 Where the panel considers that a social worker is required as a witness then the chair of the panel shall instruct Parole Scotland to issue the citation.

11.3.3 The Board receives requests from solicitors or prisoners to authorise the attendance of witnesses at the oral hearing. Each request must be considered on its own merits, and witnesses should be authorised where they can contribute evidence which will assist the members of the oral hearing to reach a decision, particularly when factual matters are at issue. These requests are normally considered by the Chair allocated to the oral hearing, although they may wish to take the views of the other members if that is practical. Where the request for a witness is refused, the Chair should issue the reasons for the refusal.

11.3.4 The Chair should instruct Parole Scotland to issue a citation to social workers who are required as witnesses.

11.3.5 It is very important to remember that witnesses may be anxious about giving evidence. There is an obligation on the chair to ensure that witnesses are treated with courtesy and respect and are not inconvenienced beyond what is necessary. Chairs

will require to be vigilant about the way that witnesses or the prisoner are questioned and to intervene if the questioning becomes aggressive, unfair or inappropriate. Witnesses should be offered a break where proceedings have gone on for a lengthy period of time.

11.3.6 The Board may receive requests from witnesses (such as social workers) to be excused from attending the oral hearing. Again, these decisions are for the Chair, who should consult with the other members whenever possible. In reaching a decision on the excusal of witnesses, the members may wish to consider the following-

- The decision to release at an oral hearing will often result in the immediate release of the prisoner. Accordingly, any postponement of the hearing will result in the prisoner remaining in prison until the hearing is rescheduled and takes place. Members must have regard to Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which prohibits arbitrary detention, and should avoid postponements unless they cannot be avoided, having regard to the reasons put forward.

The panel will therefore wish to consider whether the reason that a witness cannot attend is a good one. If not, the witness may be asked by Parole Scotland to attend in accordance with the citation. However, the panel will also wish to consider whether the information to be provided by the witness can be obtained by other means, such as by preparation of a supplementary report, or the attendance of a colleague (such as a team leader) who can become familiar with the circumstances of the case and dossier in advance of the hearing, and provide evidence on the matters at issue to the hearing. It may be appropriate to ask Parole Scotland to take the views of the solicitor before making such a decision.

11.3.7 Once the professional witnesses have given evidence then they should be released from the hearing unless there is good reason to ask them to remain.

11.4. Legal Representation

11.4.1 A prisoner is entitled to be legally represented at the oral hearing. Where the panel considers that the prisoner lacks capacity to instruct a solicitor it can appoint a solicitor to represent their interests (Rule 26(5)). The panel may seek information, recommendations or reports from such persons as appear to it to be suitably qualified or experienced in the field of mental capacity and mental welfare to assist when considering such a course. In practice, the first course of action should be to establish from the prison whether they consider there is any question that the prisoner has capacity to instruct a solicitor. If the prisoner lacks capacity to instruct a solicitor, the panel may make such arrangements as it considers appropriate to secure representation for them. This will be a solicitor appointed from the list of legal representatives held by Parole Scotland.

11.4.2 Any person may represent a party at an oral hearing if this is authorised under Rule 26. The party must give written notice of the name, address and occupation of the person they intend to authorise for that purpose to the oral hearing panel and to the other party. This notice must be provided within four weeks of the dossier being sent. The panel may refuse to permit a person to represent a party if it considers that there are good and sufficient reasons for doing so. There is a presumption that prisoners should not represent each other. On occasion prisoners have nominated other prisoners or other non-legally qualified individuals to represent them. A panel should be extremely cautious about approving this having regard to prisoner management, confidentiality and ensuring appropriate representation. In particular, solicitors are subject to ethical constraints in relation to their service and there are serious professional consequences if they breach rules of professional conduct. However, prisoners, or others who are not subject to professional regulation and oversight, are not so bound.

11.4.3 Where the prisoner does not authorise a representative, the panel may appoint a representative to act on their behalf. If the prisoner has capacity to instruct then this can only be done with the prisoner's agreement, and the panel will wish to consider whether it is better to have the prisoner make their own arrangements for representation, rather than becoming directly involved in this process. This will only

be done in exceptional circumstances. The panel will wish to also consider that it cannot compel a solicitor to represent the prisoner.

11.5. Advocacy

11.5.1 Occasionally a prisoner or their legal representative will request the attendance of an advocacy worker at a hearing. Where a prisoner has a cognitive impairment, significant intellectual challenges, or a severe and enduring mental health problem an advocacy worker can help the prisoner to understand their rights, express their views, and help to make sure their voice is heard within the parole process. This may be supporting the prisoner to prepare written representations to the Board or attend the hearing to support the prisoner where there may be barriers to participation, for example highlighting the need for a break during the proceedings or supporting the prisoner if they do not fully understand any part of the process. Full reasons should be given for the request for the attendance of an advocacy worker, and if granted the role of the advocacy worker must be explicit. The advocacy worker must not give advice to the prisoner or consult with others on behalf of the prisoner, participate in the hearing or express opinion. The advocacy worker must be employed by an independent professional advocacy organisation. Unlike Mental Health Tribunal proceedings, there is no statutory role for an advocacy worker nor an absolute right for them to attend, and the panel will wish to consider whether the prisoner has legal representation and whether there are special circumstances which would make the attendance of an advocacy worker appropriate.

11.6 Statement of Preparation

11.6.1 Rule 31 provides that the prisoner or their legal representative must send the panel a statement of preparation not less than 10 working days before the hearing. It is important that the panel consider this when it is received, and address any issues raised in advance of the hearing if this is possible. It may be necessary to postpone the hearing if the issues raised are significant and cannot be addressed before the hearing.

11.7 Observers

11.7.1 The panel can authorise the attendance of any person at the oral hearing under Rule 27(3). This can be used to authorise the attendance of observers.

11.8 Other considerations

11.8.1 There are other issues which may be considered in advance of, or at an oral hearing. The Board has specific guidance on some of these. The issues could include

- Information which has been submitted as non-disclosable information in terms of Rule 9. Guidance on this can be found in Annex 2 of this guidance.
- A request from a victim to attend in terms of Rule 30. Guidance on this can be found in Annex 6 of this guidance.

11.9 Review of conduct and outcomes

11.9.1 The conduct and outcomes of hearings and casework considerations are kept under general scrutiny by the Chairperson of the Board and the Chief Executive of Parole Scotland.

11.10 Decisions to release

11.10.1 The decision should be intimated on the day that it is taken, unless there are good reasons why this cannot be done. The intimation is done by the electronic submission of the Early Intimation of Decision (EID) form to Parole Scotland.

11.10.2 Where the panel directs release it must make recommendations for all conditions to be included in a licence.

11.11 No release decisions - further reviews and recommendations

11.11.1 If not directing release, the panel must fix the date of the next review. The 1993 Act specifies that the review period cannot exceed two years from the date of the decision in Life and OLR sentence prisoner cases. For recalled extended

sentence prisoner cases, the 1993 Act specifies that the prisoner cannot require Scottish Ministers to refer his case to the Board within a year of the last decision. This does not limit the Board's flexibility in terms of setting a review period which can be less than 12 months. The period will be fixed with reference to the circumstances of the prisoner (including the "anxious scrutiny" required where prisoners are beyond the punishment part of a life or OLR sentence), the outline of the future sentence management plan and any advisory recommendations made by the panel. The decision can include the panel's views on the degree of risk, the steps needed to address this and the desirability of transfer of the prisoner to different conditions within the options available. Scottish Ministers have indicated that serious consideration will be given to any such views and, if accepted, will take all reasonable steps to implement them.

11.11.2 The Board, at the request of a life or OLR sentence prisoner, may direct the Scottish Ministers to refer the case to the Board before the date fixed for the next hearing. A request under this provision could be made by such a prisoner if, for example, they consider that recommendations have been implemented successfully well before the date fixed for the next hearing. Such requests are currently considered by the Board at a recall and ad hoc meeting.

Section 12 Recommendations and directions in Part 3 cases

Date of last review	27 June 2023
Next scheduled review	27 June 2025

12.1 Recommendations and directions open to the Board in Part 3 cases

12.1.1 The range of recommendations and directions open to the Board is extensive. Recommendations to Scottish Ministers are made before the first release and in respect of licence conditions or transfer of supervision. For everything else the Board makes directions. The following are the most common recommendations and directions:

- i. Recommend release with licence conditions. This can be at the Parole Qualifying Date (PQD) or at a subsequent review.
- ii. Recommend revocation of licence and recall to custody. For clarity, this also applies in indeterminate cases.
- iii. Recommend release with a forward date. This must be soundly based on information contained in the dossier and the Board's expectations of what is required to happen up to the release date clearly specified in the reasons for example, satisfactorily complete offending behaviour work or counselling, experience home leaves from open conditions. Members should note that the case of *Dickins* means that the Board has no power to review a decision to release where there has been a change in circumstances that might otherwise have caused a panel to make a different decision.
- iv. Not to recommend release and fix a further review. The review period is not more than 12 months, but a period of less than 12 months can be fixed. A period of six months is usually considered the minimum effective review period because of the time required for preparation of the dossier and subsequent processes. A shorter review period can be fixed, if there is good reason for doing so. However, deferrals (or adjournments

of oral hearings) are usually suggested for further considerations within 6 months to avoid the need for preparation of a new dossier. It is good practice to set out the reasons why the panel has selected the review period.

- v. Not to recommend release and, if there is to be no other review due or recommended before the earliest date of liberation (EDL), to recommend licence conditions for a non-parole licence.
- vi. Not to recommend release and, if there is no other review due or recommended to consider early release on parole before the EDL, recommend that an updated dossier is returned a short period (usually 10 weeks) before the EDL to consider recommending additional licence conditions for a non-parole licence. This procedure is only used in cases where there may be some likelihood of change for example to the release plan, or in terms of the outcome of on-going offending-behaviour work, that would be relevant to proper consideration of additional licence conditions. The prisoner is entitled to submit representations in relation to the licence conditions which may be imposed. It should be borne in mind that such further reviews necessitate the preparation of a new dossier and members should avoid requiring this unless necessary.
- vii. Defer or adjourn a case for further information that is already in existence and should have been made available to the Board, or to allow the prisoner to comment on information tabled less than four weeks before the case is considered.
- viii. In the case of a prisoner's immediate re-release after recall, direct release on recommended licence conditions.
- ix. In the case of a prisoner's immediate re-release after recall decide not to direct release and review in normal course that is, annually, where

there is more than 12 months to the SED. A review in less than 12 months may also be directed.

- x. In subsequent reviews following recall, the Board will direct or not direct release in extended sentence prisoner cases. In determinate sentence prisoner cases the Board will recommend or not recommend release.
- xi. Recommend licence conditions in cases referred for that specific purpose. Such cases include prisoners who have not previously been recommended for release on parole, prisoners who have self-rejected from the parole process and extended sentence prisoners where the custodial part is less than four years but the combined sentence is four years or more.
- xii. Recommend transfer of supervision or not as the case may be.
- xiii. Recommend variation of licence conditions or insertion of new conditions where licence conditions have previously been recommended.
- xiv. Recommend termination of supervision or not as the case may be.
- xv. Direct that a preliminary hearing should be fixed-see section 20..
- xvi. Direct that an oral hearing should be fixed. See section 13 for guidance on this.

12.1.2 The treatment of Children and Young People cases is worthy of particular mention with the additional considerations available to the Board being:

- i) To recommend release on licence at any time with licence conditions (the Board is not bound to wait until PQD in such cases). When a child or young person under 18 is released, it is always with licence conditions

recommended by the Board regardless of whether or not the sentence was short-term or long-term.

ii) To recommend licence conditions for release at EDL whether or not the sentence was short-term or long-term.

Section 13 Casework meetings

Date of last review	6 January 2026
Next scheduled review	6 January 2028

13.1 General guidelines

13.1.1 Dossiers for a casework meeting are assembled by Parole Scotland and notified to members at least two weeks in advance of the meeting. All members are required to read the dossiers tabled for a casework meeting and come to a view on the merits of each case. Questions often arise which are dealt with by email in advance of the meeting. This process often results in changes to the dossiers, and members should be alert to such changes and to information provided by email in advance of the meeting.

13.1.2 Members should place their draft casework minutes in the relevant network folder 48 hours before the casework meeting. Subject to changes agreed at the casework meeting, the casework minute will form the basis for the final approved minute issued to the prisoner and Ministers. The principal responsibility for drafting the decision rests with the presenting member, although the chair will scrutinise the decision for accuracy. Once the decision is in a form approved by all members present, then the minute will be signed off by the person who chaired the meeting or the part where the case was discussed. Alternative arrangements will be made where the chair will be absent during that period.

13.1.3 Everyone present is expected to have read all dossiers and draft casework minutes beforehand. A number of different approaches to managing the discussion of cases has developed and the chair should check with members that they are happy with the proposed approach. When working remotely, it can be helpful to share the minute with the other members on the Teams screen while it is being approved. Another approach is to agree the minutes as far as possible in advance and identify any areas of disagreement for discussion at the meeting.

13.1.4 If discussing the full details of the decision, start with a brief introduction covering identification and location of the prisoner and the reason for the case being considered. Avoid repeating minute details which are already known to the other members present.

13.1.5 State the recommendation. It is not necessary to read the full casework minute as the other members will have read it beforehand. However, where there is disagreement on the recommendation to be made, it is helpful to focus discussion on the areas of disagreement specifically regarding risk and reasons. The casework minute is to be produced in the format that will be issued to the prisoner. If unable to state a recommendation then please say so at the outset.

13.1.6 When preparing the casework minute, reflect the balance between positive and negative factors identified in the dossier reports.

13.1.7 Give a general commentary on any offending history including the nature, extent, patterns and disposals and relate these factors to the index offence(s) and likely future risk.

13.1.8 Comment on any offending-behaviour programmes or related counselling that has been undertaken and the reported outcome in terms of perceived benefits and relate this to future risk.

13.1.9 Comment on the findings and conclusions of the social work reports. Cover family attitudes, family support, prospects of reintegration, possible adverse reaction towards the prisoner, what is different now in the prisoner's personal circumstances from the time of the index offence in terms of risk reduction, any victim issues, employment prospects and social work support available.

13.1.10 The casework minute should include reference to licence conditions recommended in the social work reports and clear links to any additional licence conditions being recommended evidencing why they are necessary and proportionate to the management of risk in the community..

13.2 Record of decision

13.2.1 The casework minute is designed to support identification of the relevant information for decision making. This structure is designed to assist selection of the key elements that should be set out in the reasons for the decision (see section 11). The casework minute should record the information presented, any other factors arising from discussion, the decision, any recommended additional licence conditions, reasons and any supplementary recommendations or requests. Care should be taken to record the reasons for the decision fully and accurately.

13.3 Consideration of fixing oral hearings at a casework meeting

13.3.1 Where a panel is considering a case at a casework meeting, the decision will be based on the information contained in the dossier, including late papers and representations from the offender and their solicitor. It is open to the panel to conclude that the information available in the dossier is insufficient to reach a decision, in which case it may fix an oral hearing. This hearing will take place (either in person or by live link) in the presence of the prisoner, their legal representative, and any witnesses identified by the panel at the casework meeting as required.

13.3.2 The case of *Osborn, Booth and Reilly*, [2013] UKSC 61 ; [2014] AC 1115 (*Osborn*) brought with it a significant change in the way in which the panel has to consider the need for an oral hearing. This would be conducted in terms of Part 4 of the Rules.

13.3.4 The judgement in *Osborn* is worth reading and is available through the [portal](#). There is no doubt that the application of *Osborn* has resulted in an increase in the number of oral hearings ordered by the Board.

13.3.5 This guidance is intended to support Board members in decision making around the ordering of oral hearings where the case is initially considered at a casework meeting. However, it is not to be considered exhaustive and there may be cases not covered here where an oral hearing should be ordered.

13.4 When to order an oral hearing

13.4.1 The following guidance is drawn from *Osborn* and the Board's experience since *Osborn* including petitions for judicial review on the subject of oral hearings.

13.4.2 In every case (including recall cases) the decision minutes will note that an oral hearing was considered. Where an oral hearing is not fixed, care must be taken to explain the reasons for this decision, particularly where an oral hearing was requested by the prisoner or where, on the facts of the case, it required detailed consideration. Special care should be taken when the prisoner is not legally represented and may not be aware that they can ask for an oral hearing. It is important to stress that the Board is required to consider whether fairness requires that an oral hearing is fixed, irrespective of whether the prisoner has specifically asked for one.

13.4.3 Oral hearings are not restricted to the resolution of disputes about facts. A range of other issues may be examined at an oral hearing.

13.4.4 The likelihood of being released following the oral hearing is not a factor which should be considered - for example, where a prisoner has outstanding programme work or is held on remand for alleged new offences. The panel should take the whole circumstances into account when deciding whether or not to grant an oral hearing and not refuse one simply because the possibility of release is assessed as unlikely. The Board can properly be accused of fettering its discretion if it decides in advance what the outcome of the oral hearing might be. The Court's first stated conclusion in *Osborn* was, "*... the board should hold an Oral Hearing before determining an application for release ... whenever fairness to the prisoner requires such a hearing in the light of the facts of the case and the importance of what is at stake ...*".

13.4.5 The decision minute ordering an oral hearing should contain a clear note of who is to be cited to give evidence, what evidence they are expected to give and what documents they are expected to produce. Witnesses are not limited to those who have provided reports in the dossier and panels may feel it necessary, for example, to hear from others who have contributed to the prisoner's management such as members of

the Risk Management Team, occupational therapists, or prison psychologists. Up-to-date reports and risk assessments should be requested if the available reports are outwith their normal timescales.

13.4.6 The increase in the ordering of oral hearings as a consequence of these developments has resulted in more work and expense for the Board but that is not a factor to be taken into account. Fairness is the touchstone, rather than work or expense. Equally, there has been an increase in the number of social workers and SPS staff cited to give evidence. That is an inevitable consequence of a broad application of *Osborn*.

13.4.7 Prisoners and the panel should be able to explore and challenge material in the dossier if fairness requires that and if decisions are to be taken on the best evidence available, especially if the prisoner wishes to make submissions about the interpretation of evidence which can only be properly explored at an oral hearing rather than in a written submission. Some prisoners may submit that they are not able to fully express themselves in writing and this may constitute sufficient reason for setting an oral hearing.

13.4.8 When considering casework dossiers, panels should always consider an oral hearing whether or not that is sought by the prisoner or their lawyer and should have regard to the following checklist when deciding whether or not to order such a hearing. If the answer to any of the following questions is yes or if the panel is in doubt, an oral hearing should be granted.

- i. In order to comply with common law standards of procedural fairness and the importance to the prisoner of what is at stake, is it necessary for the Board to hold an oral hearing before determining the issue of release?
- ii. Are there facts which appear to the panel to be important which are in dispute, or where there is a significant explanation or mitigation advanced which needs to be heard orally in order fairly to determine its credibility before determining the issue of release?

- iii. Is an oral hearing necessary to enable a panel of the Board to consider the risk independently and fairly, or the means by which it should be managed and addressed?
- iv. Is it maintained on tenable grounds and where the prisoner has something legitimate to contribute that a face to face encounter with the Board is necessary to enable the prisoner or their representative to put their case effectively?
- v. Is it maintained on tenable grounds and where the prisoner has something legitimate to contribute that the questioning of those who have dealt with the prisoner is necessary to test their views?
- vi. Is there information that would be best acquired from the prisoner in order to make the decision that affects the outcome for them?
- vii. In order to act fairly, might the Board's independent consideration of risk, and of the means by which it should be managed and addressed, benefit from the closer examination which an oral hearing can provide?
- viii. Is an oral hearing necessary to reflect the prisoner's legitimate interest in being able to participate in a decision with important implications for them?
- ix. Do one or both of the social work reports contains an assessment of risk, or conclusions, with which the panel does not agree? If the panel has a reasonable and objective basis for not being prepared to accept the assessments or conclusions, an oral hearing should be granted. It is not enough for the panel simply to substitute its view of risk and conclusions. Similarly if the prisoner has a reasonable and objective basis for disagreeing with either the risk assessment or the conclusions

an oral hearing should be granted. It will be necessary to cite the relevant social workers to attend the oral hearing.

- x. Do the social work reports significantly disagree on the assessment of risk, and/or the prisoner's management in the community? In such circumstances it will be necessary to ask the social workers to explain the reasons for their disagreement and to enable the panel and the prisoner's representative to test these conclusions.
- xi. Are there issues of credibility that are best tested in an oral hearing?
- xii. Has a significant explanation or mitigation been advanced that needs to be heard orally in order fairly to determine its credibility?
- xiii. Is there a recent positive change in behaviour, a family reconciliation, or prospects of employment and the prisoner wishes to found on any of these or other matters? If so, there is a strong argument that they should be allowed to do so at an oral hearing where it would be possible to explore their significance. The fact that the prisoner may fail to demonstrate their significance in terms of their risk and its manageability on licence is not a reason for refusing to grant an oral hearing to allow them the opportunity. Fairness requires the prisoner to have the opportunity to put their case to a panel of the Board in person.
- xiv. If English is not the prisoner's first language, would an oral hearing make the process fairer?

13.4.9 Panels should identify what information may be required for the oral hearing. It is important to be mindful that citing witnesses to oral hearings takes them away from their other professional responsibilities, and the panel should carefully consider whether their attendance is necessary, or whether an addendum report may be sufficient. Where the prisoner wishes to make out their case for release and does not dispute the content of reports, it may not be necessary to cite professional witnesses to give evidence, nor to request addendum reports.

13.5 Where an oral hearing should not be ordered

13.5.1 An oral hearing should not be ordered where the sole reason is to obtain information that could be provided in the form of a report. Keep in mind that the prisoner must have something legitimate to contribute to an oral hearing and it may be necessary to explore the legitimacy of this contribution with them or with their lawyer before making a decision. An oral hearing should not be fixed on the basis of an unsupported request and the panel may find it necessary to ask the prisoner or their lawyer to provide reasonable justification if none is apparent from the dossier or any submission made by the lawyer. Lord Reed in *Osborn* talks of “*facts which appear to the Board to be important*” and that must mean important to a fair disposal of the case overall and not just from the panel’s point of view. Apart from anything else, taking a view at such an early stage is to pre-judge the case.

13.5.2 The judgement in *Osborn* talks of an “institutional reluctance” to order oral hearings. The panel should not look for ways to avoid ordering oral hearings but should ensure that it has good reason to order one.

13.5.3 Members of panels can take different views of the need for an oral hearing. Given the very broad nature of *Osborn*, where one member supports the ordering of an oral hearing then this difference of views, in itself, may be strongly suggestive that an oral hearing is appropriate.

13.6 Procedure in advance of the oral hearing

13.6.1 The Board may receive requests from solicitors or prisoners to authorise the attendance of witnesses at the oral hearing. Each request must be considered on its own merits, and witnesses should be authorised where they can contribute evidence which will assist the members of the oral hearing to reach a decision, particularly when factual matters are at issue. These requests are normally considered by the chair of the panel allocated to the oral hearing, although they may wish to take the views of the other members if that is practical. Where the request for a witness is refused, the chair should issue the reasons for the refusal.

13.6.2 The chair should arrange for Parole Scotland to issue a citation to social workers who are required as witnesses. This will avoid a situation arising where a social work witness does not attend the oral hearing because they believe that a request from a prisoner or solicitor does not carry the same weight as a citation.

13.6.3 The Board may receive requests from witnesses (such as social workers) to be excused from attending the oral hearing. Again, these decisions are for the chair, who should consult with the other members whenever possible. In reaching a decision on the excusal of witnesses, the members may wish to consider the following-

- The decision to release at an oral hearing will often result in the immediate release of the prisoner. Accordingly, any postponement of the hearing will result in the prisoner remaining in prison until the hearing is rescheduled and takes place. Members must have regard to Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which prohibits arbitrary detention, and should avoid postponements unless they cannot be avoided, having regard to the reasons put forward.
- The panel will therefore wish to consider whether the reason that a witness cannot attend is a good one. If not, the witness may be asked by Parole Scotland to attend in accordance with the citation. However, the panel will also wish to consider whether the information to be provided by the witness can be obtained by other means, such as by preparation of a supplementary report, or the attendance of a colleague (such as a team leader) who can become familiar with the circumstances of the case and dossier in advance of the hearing, and provide evidence on the matters at issue to the hearing. It may be appropriate to ask Parole Scotland to take the views of the solicitor before making such a decision.

Section 14 Reasons for decisions

Date of last review	17 April 2024
Next scheduled review	17 April 2026

14.1 Introduction

14.1.1 The Board acts in a judicial capacity. As a matter of law, and just as importantly for practical considerations, the Board is required to provide reasons for its decisions and recommendations, including licence conditions. The reasons need to be intelligible and understood by the prisoner and those involved in their management, whether in custody or in the community. They need to be based on evidence before the Board, which the Board has accepted. The preparation of sound reasons to support decisions and recommendations is essential to avoid unnecessary subsequent clarification or explanation, or recourse to judicial review.

14.1.2 It is important that reasons accurately and adequately reflect the consideration given to a case and the basis for the decision or recommendation. Even a sound decision may be challenged if the reasons do not show that the case has been considered properly. Risk may reasonably be referred to as "manageable" or "unmanageable". It is helpful to approach the question of risk in a staged way. Firstly, is the risk that of serious harm? If so, who is at risk, and how likely is the scenario in which serious harm is caused to them? Consideration should then be given to whether this risk could be managed by the risk management plan which will be implemented by those supervising the prisoner. It is best to avoid describing a prisoner as dangerous, although it is reasonable to quote from risk assessments or the sentencing judge report contained within the dossier. The Board in making assessments does not use any structured or accredited risk assessment tools or procedures to make its decisions, although it can take account of risk assessments completed by qualified people. Care should be taken in describing risk assessments in Board minutes to ensure that the Board's reasons for the decision are clear.

14.2 General principles

14.2.1 Reasons should be clear, accurate and concise. Short and simple sentences are best. However, undue terseness should be avoided so that misunderstanding does not arise. It is a question of striking the right balance in each case under review.

14.2.2 Members participating at a casework meeting or sitting on an oral hearing are collectively responsible for the reasons and their accuracy and soundness. Before ratification it is good practice and an expected function for all the Board members to check the draft minutes of the cases they participated in for accuracy. Chairs should ensure that general members are given sufficient time to review the decision minute prior to the expiry of 10 working days from the oral hearing. General members should review decision minutes timeously; if they are going to be unavailable and unable to review the decision minute after the oral hearing, they should advise the Chair of this fact.

14.2.3 Members sitting on a panel must make their decision clear. Reasons should be unambiguous and should avoid double negatives. It is important that the reasons for the decision are stated clearly as such, and are not just a restatement of the decision itself. It is also useful to set out the reason for the referral by Scottish Ministers and the relevant statutory test that applies in the particular case. The templates provided by the Board assist with this.

14.2.4 The precise content of the reasons will vary with each case. However, there are some useful ground rules and guidance. Court decisions also provide guidance and principles to follow as a matter of good practice and some court decisions are mentioned in separate guidance on case law.

14.2.5 Always remember that the Board's primary concern is with assessment of risk to the public and reasons should be specific, factually correct, concerned with risk and risk assessment, and supported by evidence in the dossier. The reasons given should always be a balancing exercise in which evidence supporting release, (and which considers the benefit to the public and the offender) is weighed against

opposing evidence (which considers the risk to the public). It is a matter for the Board how it weighs the evidence. Be careful to ensure that the reasons given do not point towards an opposite conclusion from the decision or recommendation. Avoid gratuitous advice or comments which do not have a bearing on risk since they are unnecessary and can lead to complications and accusations of stereotyping or making assumptions about gender, race, religion, cultural or sexual orientation.

14.2.6 Concisely cover the issues, the areas of concern, and show how the decision or recommendation was reached. The reasons must be intelligible and must deal with the important issues. Reference to every material issue is unnecessary and the reader should know why the conclusion was reached on the principal issues. This approach is particularly important where the decision or recommendation is contrary to conclusions or recommendations in dossier reports. In that case, the Board should set out its reasons for reaching a different conclusion. It is the Board's duty to form its own judgement on the reports in the dossier. It is not obliged to adopt the conclusions of others; its duty is to consider the evidence and decide for itself whether it is satisfied or otherwise about the acceptability of risk. Where the Board has reached a different conclusion from that of professional witnesses then it is very important that the Board sets out the reasons why the professional evidence has not been accepted. The competing views should be scrutinised and the decision should clearly identify the grounds on which it made its decision.

The following approaches are recommended:

- i) Start with the context of the index offence, its seriousness etc. relative to any previous offending history. This can be an effective tool to formulate the risk presented by the offender, and whether it would constitute a risk of serious harm.
- ii) Consider the prisoner's conduct in custody. Caution is required because the Board should not rely solely on behaviour in custody as evidence of ability or motivation to fully comply with supervision.

- iii) Deal with the prisoner's approach to the causes and consequences of offending behaviour, the steps being taken to confront the issues of concern and the assessed outcome.
- iv) Refer to release plans and the likelihood or otherwise of them assisting with reintegration and rehabilitation. Attitudes towards supervision are important in relation to the reduction of risk or otherwise.
- v) Evidence of previous compliance with, or breaches of, community-based court disposals and bail may be relevant.
- vi) Specify why any additional licence condition is being recommended. The impact on the prisoner's human rights under the European Convention must always be considered in the context of risk and the principle of proportionality (*R v Secretary of State for Home Department - Craven (2001)*); licence conditions must be demonstrably lawful, proportionate and necessary for the aim of protecting public safety. Their meaning and effect should be clear and they should not give rise to any significant ambiguity.
- vii) Indicate the remaining outstanding areas of concern. Ensure wherever possible that relevant offending-behaviour programmes or counselling are available.
- viii) Avoid jargon or hackneyed phrases - they may mean different things in different cases. The Parole Board Style Guide can assist.
- ix) Avoid obtuse or pompous phrases and do not use Latin.
- x) Avoid use of absolutes or precise numbers. Remember that inaccuracies on such points may exist, even though they remain unchallenged up to the point the case is considered. For example, referring to "no evidence" invites argument or challenge to show there is some evidence. Such statements are better expressed as "little evidence". Similarly, do not use absolute numbers in relation to previous convictions, misconduct reports or drug tests as this invites

unnecessary argument or challenge. Phrases such as "significant offending history" "several misconduct reports" etc. are better.

xi) Where release is not recommended and the case will be reviewed again in the future, it is important that the reasons do not appear to restrict the discretion of a future panel of the Board. It can be helpful to explain why the Board consider that completing a course of action could support an application for release at a subsequent hearing. A therapeutic programme can reduce risk and build skills for release into the community while a period at the Open Estate can provide evidence of the prisoner's ability to apply his/her skills. However, the Board's role is to assess risk rather than manage the sentence and excessive prescription may make a future panel's consideration more difficult.

xii) The Court of Session has stated that the Board require to exercise "*anxious scrutiny*" of the ongoing detention of indeterminate sentence prisoners, and that this requirement will become more important the longer a prisoner is in custody following the expiry of their punishment part. The reasons for the decision should be expressed in a way which demonstrates that the Board has carried out this "*anxious scrutiny*".

14.3 Information received after decision

14.3.1 There may be cases where information is received after consideration by an oral hearing panel or a casework meeting. It is worth stressing that the decision made at the hearing or casework meeting stands and it would not be appropriate to include information that was not available at the time the decision was made. This is because it is a fundamental requirement for fairness that the prisoner and their representative (if appointed) is aware of the facts available to the Board (unless Rule 9 applies) and has an opportunity to address them prior to or at the hearing. In circumstances where information has come to the Board after the decision has been made, it would be appropriate to advise the prisoner and his representative (if appointed) that the information was not taken into account and it will be for them to decide whether to take any further action such as request a fresh consideration or seek a judicial review.

14.4 Dissenting decisions

14.4.1 There will be occasions when Board members do not agree. On these occasions a decision can be taken on the basis of the majority view. In such cases it is very important to ensure that the dissenting member's reasons for dissenting are adequately recorded in the decision minute. It may be best practice for the dissenting member to draft their own reasons, which the legal Chair can insert into the minute. Members should make every effort to ensure that all members agree with the decision minute, even if they disagree with the decision on release. Where members disagree about a form of words used in the minute, this should be addressed by insertion of a paragraph which identifies the passage over which there is disagreement and provides the alternative wording favoured by the minority member.

14.5 Publication of decision summary – [see section 19](#)

Section 15 Licence conditions

Date of last review	22 November 2024
Next scheduled review	22 November 2026

15.1 Introduction

15.1.1 Casework and oral hearing panels must fix licence conditions when they are recommending or directing release. In cases where there will be no further consideration of release before the earliest date of liberation, the Board should recommend licence conditions which should apply at that point. Unless there are exceptional reasons that will require a further referral.

15.2 Test

15.2.1 The Board must be satisfied that recommended licence conditions are lawful, necessary and proportionate in order to manage safely such risk as the prisoner poses in the community.

15.3 Suggested approach

15.3.1 The Board has a template set of licence conditions within each relevant template minute or intimation, which can be found in the [portal](#). This template should be used to form the basis of recommended licence conditions. The conditions contained in the template have been framed to comply with the law as it currently stands, and where the template contains a licence condition which is framed to achieve the aims of the panel, it is desirable to use the wording from the template. It should be noted that the template contains the most frequently used licence conditions, and not all will be relevant in any particular case. Only necessary conditions should be used (as per the test), and conditions which are not relevant should be deleted from the template. The remaining conditions should automatically re-number in accordance with any deletions. There is a space at the end of the document for the insertion of any additional conditions not included in the template.

15.3.2 The template is now widely used by social workers, and recommendations for licence conditions within their reports will often mirror the template.

15.3.3 In considering the application of the test, the panel will have to consider the impact of the condition on the offender, against the protection that it offers to the public in terms of managing their risk. More onerous conditions will usually require more justification (including setting out in the decision minute the reasons why they were deemed appropriate). Members should also take particular care when considering the necessary and proportionate aspects of the graded conditions in the template under “Addictions and dependencies” and the alternative groups of conditions under “Information technology” and “Electronic monitoring/Curfew”.

15.3.4 The prisoner is entitled to submit representations in relation to the licence conditions which may be recommended. If the prisoner disputes that licence conditions are lawful, proportionate and necessary, the Board may fix an oral hearing to determine the issue, if this is necessary in the interests of fairness.

15.4 Consideration of victims

15.4.1 The needs and rights of victims are often a consideration when setting licence conditions. There may be times when a fine judgement will be required but there are likely to be many situations where the rights or freedoms of the prisoner have to be curtailed to ensure that the rights of their victim(s) are protected. This is most likely to be in relation to geographical exclusions designed to protect victims from avoidable contact with the prisoner. Members should also keep in mind that applying a very precise geographical exclusion may provide more information than is necessary about a victim’s home area. Geographical exclusions are not absolute as the supervising officer is able to provide prior permission to enter the excluded area. It is also worth considering that where the prisoner has a need to enter an excluded area then the supervising officer may be able to provide permission in such a way that the needs of the victim can continue to be protected.

15.4.2 Any request for a condition requiring an offender not to leave a defined area should be given careful consideration as it is likely to significantly restrict the prisoner's movements.

Section 16 Supervision in the community

Date of last review	22 November 2024
Next scheduled review	22 November 2026

16.1 Introduction

16.1.1 The Board’s decisions on whether to direct early release from prison on licence, with appropriate licence conditions, are significantly assisted through accurate information and the formulation of realistic action plans provided in reports from social workers based in the community and in prisons. These decisions by the Board define the nature and extent of compulsory statutory supervision on licence in the community.

16.1.2 The scope of social work reports is governed by the “National Outcomes and Standards for Social Work Services in the Criminal Justice System” – the “National Standards”. A link to the National Standards has been provided on the [Portal](#). The National Standards apply to the supervision of all determinate sentence prisoners released on parole and non-parole licence, and to the supervision of all licences for indeterminate sentence prisoners. The following paragraphs give a brief overview.

16.1.3 The term “throughcare” refers to a range of services provided to assist prisoners to prepare for release and to help them resettle in the community. To be effective, throughcare services must be focused, consistent and adapted both to the risk and needs of the offender, and to the type of offending. The National Standards seek to ensure consistent practice in criminal justice social work services across all local authorities in Scotland. The safety of the public is the primary concern but it is recognised that the successful resettlement of the offender in the community offers the best opportunity of preventing further offending.

16.2 General objectives

16.2.1 In relation to release on licence, the main activities of social workers in prisons are the assessment of risk and providing professional services to reduce risk

and support reintegration. The scope of the work includes offering prisoners access to services, providing a range of counselling services, and various functions in relation to the provision of accredited offending behaviour programmes. The prison social worker will provide information to assist the Board with decision making. This will include a case summary, an analysis of offending which considers the pattern, nature and seriousness of the offending to date; the likelihood of and impact of reoffending; needs which if met will sustain desistance from offending, a statement in relation to risk of serious harm, and release plans. All assessments should be informed by the use of structured risk assessment tools.

16.2.2 Social workers in the community will provide information on the prisoner's background and current circumstances, an assessment of their family and social context, and the extent to which this is likely to be supportive, or otherwise, in assisting the prisoner to resettle successfully in the community. In addition, it is expected information will be provided on the likely nature of supervision and support on release, the availability of programmes and resources to assist reintegration and reduce risk, and an assessment of the risk of reoffending or social breakdown. Information will also include the proposed release address and an assessment of its suitability, and victim considerations.

16.2.3 Most usually the prison and community based social workers work collaboratively to produce information in one integrated document, a Throughcare Assessment for Release on Licence (TARL) report. There should always be consultation between both professionals. They will evaluate the information, give an opinion on the manageability of risk in the community and suggest a provisional release plan and licence conditions. Agreement on a recommendation for release should be reached. Where agreement cannot be reached, the report should identify the areas of disagreement. Collaboration is important for two reasons. The first is to identify further work needed in the community, identify resources for this work, and make recommendations to the Board or panel. The second relates to the requirement for a pre-release planning meeting and this will apply in routine determinate sentence referrals. The National Standards specify that this should take place at least one month in advance of the release date and be attended by the prisoner, establishment social worker, supervising officer and any other relevant person.

16.3 Supervision

16.3.1 The frequency of supervision in the community is specified in the National Standards. It is reviewed regularly and can be reduced or increased depending on the risk and needs of the individual. The level of supervision and intensity of contact must be determined by an assessment of the likelihood for further offending along with a consideration of the pattern, nature and seriousness of the offending to date. Supervising officers have the discretion to maintain a more frequent level of supervision if the management of risk requires such an approach.

16.4 Variation of licence conditions and termination of supervision

16.4.1 Licence conditions may be subsequently added, amended or removed by Scottish Ministers after consultation with the Board. Early termination of the supervision conditions is possible. When application is made for the removal of the supervision element of a licence the offender remains subject to the requirements:

- You shall inform your supervising officer immediately if you are arrested or questioned by the police; and
- You shall be of good behaviour and shall keep the peace.

Applications must be preceded by a formal review and Scottish Ministers refer cases to the Board for consideration. Each referral is considered by a panel of the Board and is decided on its merits within the context of risk.

16.4.2 When considering the recall of an offender, the Board can apply additional licence conditions which enable the offender's continuing management in the community, for example electronic monitoring, the imposition of a curfew, or random drug or alcohol testing. Other licence conditions may be suggested by the supervising officer. Members should always consider the necessity and proportionality of suggested licence conditions. It is helpful if any unusual, suggested licence conditions are brought to the attention of the Board, as they may warrant broader discussion.

16.4.3 If recommended by the Board, Scottish Ministers may revoke a licence by cancelling all the conditions in it, and the person will then be treated as having been released unconditionally.

16.5 Special provisions applying to life prisoners

16.5.1 Supervising officers may apply for the termination of the supervision requirement. The supervision requirements of the licence may be lifted at the discretion of Scottish Ministers, and following a recommendation by the Board, usually once the offender has spent a significant period in the community without incident. The offender remains subject to the requirements:

- You shall inform your supervising officer immediately if you are arrested or questioned by the police; and
- You shall be of good behaviour and shall keep the peace.

16.6 Transfer of supervision

16.6.1 A supervising criminal justice social work service may apply for transfer of supervision to another local authority due to an offender relocating outwith the supervising authority. Applications received by Scottish Ministers are referred for consideration to the Board. Cases will not be referred until the dossier contains acceptance information from the proposed receiving authority. Each application is considered by a panel of the Board and is decided on its merits, within the context of risk. If a licence condition specifies a particular residential location (for example a rehabilitation facility) the prisoner cannot move address until the Board approves either deletion of that condition or a specific change of address. Care should be exercised before recommending that the residential facility should be named as an additional licence condition as it could have a negative impact on progress and rehabilitation.

16.7 Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)

16.7.1 MAPPA are a set of statutory partnership working arrangements which place a statutory duty on the responsible authorities in a local authority area to jointly

establish arrangements for assessing and managing the risk posed by certain categories of offenders. These arrangements are in addition to supervision provided by the supervising officer.

16.7.2 The purpose of MAPPA is public protection and managing the risk of serious harm. MAPPA 2014 Guidance is available through the [portal](#) and provides detailed information of the working arrangements.

16.8 Additional Requirements

16.8.1 In addition to licence conditions set by the Board, a prisoner may be subject to additional requirements that support the management of risk in the community, for example a Sexual Offences Prevention Order.

16.9 Voluntary Assistance/Throughcare

16.9.1 Where the Board does not recommend or direct early release from prison, in accordance with the general principles of throughcare, prisoners should be made aware of the availability of support of a voluntary nature, most usually referred to as voluntary throughcare. This can provide advice, guidance and assistance prior to release, and after their sentence has ended.

16.9.2 The objectives of voluntary throughcare are similar to those of statutory supervision, except that there is no element of compulsion to engage with services.

Section 17 Recall to custody

Date of last review	2 May 2025
Next scheduled review	2 May 2027

17.1 General principles

17.1.1 Recall to custody cases often represent the more testing and difficult cases for the Board to determine. In this respect, it is important to bear in mind that a number of other participants in the criminal justice system can have varying degrees of influence, positive or negative.

17.1.2 The Scottish Ministers may refer a dossier to the Board to consider grounds for recall. The Board's role is set out in the Parole Board (Scotland) Rules 2022 (the Rules). It is important to note that Rule 3(2) states that Rules 4 and 10 do not apply in recall cases: Rule 4 requires Ministers to give notice of the referral to the prisoner and Rule 10 gives the prisoner the right to make representations to the Board. In addition, the requirements of Rule 5(1) are waived so that Ministers are obliged to include in the dossier only such information and documents as may be available to them at the time when they send the dossier to the Board; and they are not required to send the dossier to the prisoner.

17.1.3 Under the terms of section 17 of the Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Act 1993 (the 1993 Act), the Scottish Ministers may also, without referring a case to the Board, revoke a release licence if the prisoner is at liberty and recall the prisoner to custody if it is expedient in the public interest to do so and it is not practicable to await a recommendation from the Board. This course of action would normally be taken where there is an immediate need to protect the public. If the prisoner has already been taken back into custody, then Scottish Ministers may revoke the licence.

17.1.4 Under section 17(1B) of the 1993 Act the Scottish Ministers may also recall and revoke the licence of short-term prisoners released on compassionate grounds.

17.1.5 After a prisoner falling into any of these categories has been returned to custody, the Scottish Ministers must refer the revocation back to the Board so that the Board can consider whether or not it is appropriate to direct that the offender be re-released.

17.1.6 In recall cases the question to be determined by the Board is whether or not, in the whole circumstances of the case, it is in the public interest that the prisoner be recalled to custody. The Board should consider whether it is satisfied that the risks posed by the prisoner can be safely managed in the community. If it is not so satisfied, the prisoner's licence should be revoked and he/she should be recalled to custody. It should be noted that this is the test which should be applied in every case at the point of consideration of recall. The test for re-release may be different and the section on re-release should be referred to at that stage. A number of discretionary sanctions exist to deal with breaches of a licence without referring the case to the Board to consider grounds for recall. Much will depend on the opinions of the supervising officer and/or Scottish Ministers based on the context and seriousness of the breach and the perceived level of risk to public safety. For example, a supervising officer may issue oral and written warnings and Scottish Ministers may issue a warning letter. Further information is contained in the relevant section of the National Standards for Throughcare which are available through the [portal](#).

17.1.7 A recall case will normally be referred to the Board with a Throughcare Licence Breach Report (TLBR or "breach report") prepared by the prisoner's supervising officer.

17.1.8 Once a case is referred to the Board it must consider the whole circumstances in relation to relevant risk factors. These could include the overall response to supervision in the community; the nature and circumstances of any alleged offending, such as violence, and the relationship to the index offences; new convictions; substance misuse; and other behaviour that has a bearing on their previous offending history and current circumstances. While the Board will consider the recommendation made in the TLBR, the decision on recall lies with the Board alone and will be on the basis of risk and whether or not this can be safely managed in the community.

17.1.9 This approach is flexible and means there is, in practice, no presumption in favour of recall to custody. An important circumstance which the Board will require to take into account is whether or not the prisoner has been in contact with his or her supervising officer, and whether the prisoner's whereabouts are known. It is also worth noting that supervising officers are required to submit a breach report to Scottish Ministers if there has been further offending regardless of its seriousness or any link to past offending. The TLBR may simply describe a deterioration in the prisoner's compliance with his or her licence, which has raised questions about their management, or it may also include a report from Police Scotland about the questioning or detention of the prisoner. The TLBR should also include a report on other sanctions imposed earlier by the supervising officer, such as verbal or written warnings. The report will include the supervising officer's recommendation about whether a warning letter or recall is merited.

17.1.10 If the Board decides not to recall the prisoner it may recommend the issue of a warning letter. The Board may also recommend the insertion of further additional conditions on the licence so as to manage a particular aspect of behaviour.

17.1.11 Where a prisoner is released on licence and at the time of release there are outstanding charges (whether or not a subsequent conviction results), such information may be taken into account when considering the grounds for recall.

17.1.12 When a recall order is issued directly by Scottish Ministers or via a recommendation of the Board there is no mechanism by which the recall order can be rescinded, and the order must be executed. It is then a matter for the Board at the re-release stage to take into account any errors that have come to light and that had a bearing upon the recall decision. Such errors may have occurred for any reason including the dossier containing incomplete information.

17.2 Examination of the dossier in recall cases

17.2.1 When Scottish Ministers refer a case to the Board to consider recall to custody, the dossier includes the reports and information prepared at the time when

the case was last considered, the minutes of the decision or recommendation, a copy of the release licence, and any new information considered relevant particularly any TLBR. At this stage there is no disclosure of the dossier to the prisoner and the case is allocated to a casework meeting of the Board that will be considering recall cases.

17.2.2 All release licences contain the standard condition, "You shall be of good behaviour and shall keep the peace". Further charges may constitute grounds for recall but do not imply a presumption of guilt. Experience shows that when the Board has recalled a prisoner on the basis of unacceptable risk solely associated with alleged offending, the Procurator Fiscal may desert criminal proceedings by virtue of the fact of recall. Although such a decision will have been taken in the exercise of the Procurator Fiscal's discretion, submissions may also have been made to the Procurator Fiscal on behalf of the prisoner. The Crown Office is aware of the Board's concern since potentially this situation may leave the Board with little option but to re-release the prisoner on licence. However, the Board is entitled to look at all of the relevant facts including the behaviour which led to the further charges, and the reasons why further charges did not result in a conviction. Situations like this emphasise the need for care in constructing the reasons for a decision recommending recall to custody. Where appropriate, due regard should be given to overall behaviour and the reasons given should not focus too narrowly on the alleged offence.

17.2.3 There is no requirement for anyone on licence to have been convicted of a further offence before being recalled. An unacceptable risk to the public can be demonstrated by a pattern of conduct that falls short of charge or conviction, and in particular, any pattern of conduct that appears similar to the circumstances that led to the original offence. The various considerations taken into account by the Board and Scottish Ministers are different from those involved in the investigation, prosecution and trial of criminal charges. The Board does not require to be satisfied beyond a reasonable doubt before taking matters into account. In addition, the Board and Scottish Ministers are entitled to take steps in light of an apparent breach of licence conditions irrespective of what decisions are being taken elsewhere in the criminal justice system.

17.3 Deferring a decision to recall

17.3.1 The legal advice available to the Board is that in each case the Board should seek to reach a decision on the basis of the information referred by Scottish Ministers. Consequently, the Board should not defer consideration of a case unless there are serious gaps or inconsistencies in the evidence and it is clear that a decision cannot properly be made without potentially prejudicing the interests of fairness and justice in respect of the prisoner and/or public safety.

17.3.2 The decision whether to defer a case for additional information or to reach a decision to revoke a prisoner's licence on the referred information may sometimes be quite difficult, because the TLBR and the dossier as a whole may have been compiled quickly before full information is available and will usually not include the prisoner's representations or explanations. Decisions to defer should not be made lightly. A decision to defer for further information should not be made to obtain information that will only become available at some unspecified point in the future. Where there are evident indicators of unacceptable risk it will generally be better to recommend the recall of the prisoner and make a parallel request for further information to be available for consideration after the prisoner has been returned to custody.

17.4 Additional factors

17.4.1 The fear of recall to custody can sometimes have a negative effect on supervision in the community. Practical experience of recall cases indicates that emerging difficulties are often not disclosed to a supervising officer until they are so serious that the risk may be unacceptable, and recall may be the only option, rather than other discretionary sanctions.

17.4.2 Where a prisoner is released on licence the details are held on the computer database maintained by Police Scotland via the Scottish Criminal Records Online (SCRO). This information is available to operational police officers throughout Scotland. When an arrest is made there is a routine requirement to check this database. This process helps ensure that when a prisoner comes to the attention of

the police, the supervising officer will be advised and can consider the impact on risk and manageability in the community.

17.4.3 The Scottish Ministers monitor outstanding recall orders of a long duration and in cases where there is an exceptional delay in executing a recall order an explanation may be requested from Police Scotland. The SPS now has a procedure for checking all admissions against outstanding recall orders. This helps ensure that when the Board recommends recall it is enacted.

17.4.4 In the cases of extended and determinate sentence prisoners recalled from licence, their earliest date of liberation flies off and their next automatic release date is their sentence end date. Where determinate sentence and extended sentence prisoners are deemed to be unlawfully at large (UAL) for the period between issue of a recall order and return to custody, this period is added to the sentence and changes the sentence end date.

17.4.5 The Board's recall recommendation will be sent to Scottish Ministers by Parole Scotland. The Scottish Ministers issue recall orders to the police for execution. On receipt of a recall order it is processed and recorded on various databases, including the Police National Computer (PNC), a UK national facility, and this allows operational police officers throughout Scotland, England and Wales access to the information. Broadly speaking, the rules for checking the PNC are the same as those for the SCRO. The order is also allocated to local operational officers for enquiry and execution.

17.5 Casework meetings to consider recall cases

17.5.1 Rule 7 provides that recall decisions can be made by a single member of the Board, although in practice two members of the Board are assigned to the regular casework meetings of the Board that consider recall cases. The casework meeting considering grounds for recall must be independent and impartial. Rule 7(7) requires that a member of a casework meeting which recommended recall to custody cannot sit on any subsequent casework meeting or oral hearing constituted to consider the

re-release of that prisoner following his or her return to custody and this approach addresses any concerns about perceived lack of impartiality or independence.

Section 18 Consideration of rerelease

Date of last review	17 April 2024
Next scheduled review	17 April 2026

18.1 General principles

18.1.1 On being returned to custody the prisoner will be advised of the reasons for recall. The reasons are contained in the recall order. Thereafter the Scottish Ministers will make arrangements for the dossier to be issued to the prisoner.

18.1.2 The Scottish Ministers also advise the prisoner by letter of the right to submit representations and any other information to the Board.

18.1.3 Indeterminate sentence prisoners have their cases considered at an oral hearing, constituted under Part 4 of the Parole Board Rules. Other cases for re-release are considered under Part 3 of the Parole Board Rules by a panel of the Board, although that panel can decide to hold an oral hearing under Part 4. Where the case is being dealt with under Part 3, re-release will be considered whether or not representations have been received. In cases which are being dealt with by way of an oral hearing under Part 4, re-release will be considered at the hearing whether or not representations have been received beforehand. No assumption is to be made that the prisoner is content to resume serving his or her sentence.

18.1.4 The Parole Board Rules specify that a Board member who was a member of the panel that recommended the prisoner's recall to custody cannot sit as a member of a panel to consider that prisoner's re-release.

18.1.5 By convention the Board has arranged casework meetings so that cases being considered for re-release under Part 3 of the Parole Board Rules are chaired by a legal member. The requirement for a legal chair in Part 3 re-release cases is not specified in the 1993 Act or in the Parole Board Rules and the Board may from time-to-time depart from those arrangements when scheduling needs dictate.

18.2 Procedure following referral

18.2.1 On referral of a case, Scottish Ministers include in the dossier the reports and the information that was available at the time when the case was considered for recall to custody, the minutes of the decision or recommendation, and any new information considered relevant. An updated custody report, dealing with the prisoner's conduct since his recall, is usually provided, although this often arrives as a late paper, after the dossier has been issued. For Part 4 cases being dealt with at an oral hearing, updated reports will also be provided from healthcare, prison based and community based social workers.

18.2.2 There may occasionally be representations from the prisoner at the referral stage but it is more usual that the Board receives representations after referral. It should be noted that in indeterminate sentence cases representations tend to be submitted less often. This is possibly due to the availability of legal representation at the oral hearing of a case.

18.2.3 On receipt of a referral in an indeterminate sentence case Parole Scotland ensures that the necessary arrangements are made for the hearing to take place on the appointed day. This includes appointing the Chair and other members of the panel and issuing copies of the dossier.

18.3 Examination of the dossier

18.3.1 On receipt of the dossier it will be examined from the perspectives of presenting a case, or participating in an oral hearing. It is a matter for Board members to satisfy themselves that the re-release panel has all the relevant information necessary to make a decision or recommendation. The re-release panel has the option to direct re-release, not to direct re-release, or, where the case is initially dealt with under Part 3, to direct that an oral hearing be convened in terms of Part 4, or to defer for further information.

18.4 Parole Board considerations

18.4.1 Cases where re-release is to be considered by way of an oral hearing are conducted in accordance with Part 4 of The Parole Board Rules.

18.5 Deferring or adjourning a Release Case

18.5.1 The Board's general practice is that there is a strong presumption against deferral, postponement or adjournment at the stage of considering re-release. Each case should be carefully weighed in the context of reducing the potential for the prisoner to be detained in custody unnecessarily. For example, cases should not routinely be delayed for the outcome of a future court case.

18.5.2 In cases where a panel of the Board is considering re-release under Part 3 of the Parole Board Rules at a casework meeting, it must be remembered that any further information submitted to the Board after referral of the dossier must be provided to the prisoner and representations invited. This normally includes the substance of damaging information under Rule 9 although in certain circumstances the substance will not be provided. In oral hearings there are preliminary procedures that can be invoked to avoid a hearing having to be later adjourned. However, where necessary the oral hearing panel has the power to adjourn.

18.6 Decisions to rerelease

18.6.1 If an oral hearing panel decides to direct release, the decision is communicated quickly to Parole Scotland to allow Scottish Ministers to effect re-release promptly. It is the role of Scottish Ministers not the Board to decide when to release. The normal practice will be for the Chair of the panel to submit an Early Intimation of Decision (EID) and licence conditions (if applicable) on the day. The formal decision minute, with full reasons for the decision, must be sent to the parties within 10 working days of the hearing.

18.6.2 In casework rerelease cases (Part 3 of the Parole Board Rules), the decision is routinely communicated as quickly as possible to allow Scottish Ministers to effect re-release promptly. It is not the Board's role to decide when Scottish Ministers should release. That is for Scottish Ministers to decide. The normal practice will be for the panel of the Board to send the decision minute including licence conditions (if applicable) to Parole Scotland on the day of the decision. Parole Scotland will thereafter advise SPS.

18.7 Decisions to refuse rerelease - further reviews

18.7.1 Where a life sentence or OLR prisoner oral hearing does not direct re-release following recall, the next review must be on a date fixed by the panel, such date being not more than two years from the date of the decision. The review period is stated in the Early Intimation of Decision, and in the decision minute. It is good practice to set out the reasons why the panel has selected the review period.

18.7.2 Where a panel does not direct the release of an extended sentence prisoner (in the extension period) following recall, the prisoner has the right to require Scottish Ministers to refer his case to the Board to be considered not less than one year from the disposal of the previous referral. The Board can set any review period it considers appropriate but given the prisoner's right mentioned earlier, there would be little practical benefit in setting a period greater than one year and, in practice, a review period of one year is normally the longest that is fixed.

18.7.3 In other determinate sentence cases there will be no automatic referral of the case by the Scottish Ministers if there is less than 12 months to the sentence end date (SED). However, it is open to the Board to recommend another review at any time before the SED and such a recommendation will be accepted. For example, this may be on the basis of considering whether information suggests that the prisoner may represent a manageable risk before the SED or where offending behaviour work is ongoing but due to be completed before the SED. Where there are 12 months or more to the SED, and unless the Board has specified an early review, the case will be automatically referred for consideration in 12 months.

Section 19 Confidentiality of proceedings and requests for information

Date of last review	27 June 2025
Next scheduled review	27 June 2027

19.1 Introduction

19.1.1 Rule 13 of the Parole Board (Scotland) Rules 2022 (the Rules) provides the framework for the maintenance of confidentiality in parole proceedings. This guidance is intended to supplement Rule 13 with practical proposals for maintaining confidentiality and supporting greater transparency in the public interest.

19.2 Application

19.2.1 The issue of the confidentiality of parole proceedings was considered in the case of *Worboys* (reported as *The Queen on the application of DSD and NBV & Ors - v- The Parole Board of England and Wales & Ors and John Radford*). At that time, the equivalent rule in the Parole Board (Scotland) Rules 2001 was rule 9. The relevant rule in the Parole Board (Scotland) Rules 2022 is rule 13. The Court concluded that the England and Wales equivalent rule to rule 9 (rule 25) in place at that time was ultra vires (that is, unlawful). However, it is important to note that rule 25 differed from rule 9, as it did not give the chair, or chairperson of the Board, any discretion to disclose information to those not involved in the proceedings, nor to the public.

19.2.2 In fact, the Court commented favourably on the Scottish rule 9, stating that *“In our judgment, the Rule [Rule 25] clearly does go too far. There is no objective necessity for a rule which stifles the provision of all information relating to the proceedings of the Parole Board, regardless of the justified public interest in any particular set of proceedings and of the fact that not all information needs to be safeguarded. These obvious propositions are vouched by a brief examination of the earlier versions of the Parole Board Rules containing discretionary language, **the position which currently obtains in Scotland**, the position in relation to Mental Health Review tribunals, and the view of the Chairperson of the Parole Board that greater transparency is desirable, and by implication, achievable”*.

19.2.3 Rule 34 of the Rules provides for the publication of a decision summary in indeterminate cases. In such cases, a decision summary must be published if the decision is for release and may be published where the decision is not to release.

19.2.4 The *Worboys* decision makes it clear that greater transparency is desirable, and in the public interest. Beyond what is provided by rule 34, this issue will arise if the Board receives a request for information from a victim, member of the public or representative of the media. The discretion lies with the oral hearing chair in such proceedings, and with the chairperson of the Board in all other cases. In oral hearing cases, the chair will wish to take the views of the other members of the panel into account in reaching a decision on what information should be disclosed, although ultimately the decision lies with the chairperson.

19.2.5 In considering whether and how to exercise this discretion, the oral hearing chairperson will wish to have regard to the following factors-

19.2.5.1 The identity of the person making the request;

19.2.5.2 The need to balance the desirability of transparency against the rights of the prisoner, victim or third party such as a social worker or other professional or a witness in the original trial, under the European Convention on Human Rights, for example Article 8 (right to private and family life) or Article 2 (right to life).

19.2.5.3 What information can and should be provided, having regard to the above.

19.2.6 Oral hearing chairpersons should attach significant weight to the desirability of transparency, which helps maintain public confidence in the role of the Parole Board for Scotland. Chairpersons should also have particular regard to the interests of victims.

19.2.7 Rule 13 provides that the decision on whether to waive confidentiality and authorise disclosure of information lies with “*the chairperson of the Board or the*

chairperson of the panel". In Part 4 cases the decision should be taken by the chairperson of the panel, in consultation with the other panel members. However, it is often the case that Part 3 cases (casework) are considered without the involvement of a legally qualified chair. Accordingly, the Chair of the Board has decided that the decision to waive confidentiality and authorise disclosure of information in Part 3 cases should be taken by the Chair of the Board, or a person to whom this decision has been delegated (in practice, the Legal Vice-Chair). Where a panel considering a Part 3 case is asked to disclose information the panel should remit the decision to the Chair of the Board or the Legal Vice-Chair.

19.2.8 If an oral hearing chair receives a request for information or a request to attend an oral hearing from a member of the public, politician or representative of the media or the likes then this MUST be intimated to the chief executive and chairperson of the Board, notwithstanding that discretion lies with the oral hearing chair. This does not apply to the presence of observers for training purposes, such as social workers or SPS staff where the panel has the power to authorise attendance under rule 27(3).

Section 20 Preliminary hearings

Date of last review	22 November 2024
Next scheduled review	22 November 2026

20.1 Introduction

20.1.1 Rule 8 of the Parole Board (Scotland) Rules 2022 (the Rules) allows for a preliminary hearing (PH) in any case where necessary. In Part 4 cases the PH must be conducted by the chair of the panel or another legally qualified member and can include the other panel members if appropriate. In any other cases, the PH is conducted by the chairperson of the Board or any member(s) appointed for that purpose. It is for the person conducting the PH to decide who should attend, but ordinarily they would sit without other members and both parties and their representatives may attend. It may be appropriate to convene the preliminary hearing without requiring the attendance of the prisoner, although the views of their legal representative should be taken before doing so. It may also be appropriate to convene without a representative of SPS present, but as they act on behalf of Scottish Ministers who are a party to proceedings, they will be advised that the PH is taking place. PHs are heard in private. The decision must be recorded in writing and sent to parties within 10 working days of the conclusion of the hearing.

20.2 Reasons to hold a PH

20.2.1 While not specified in the Rules, a PH should be held where it is necessary to assist the progress of the case (hearing or CWM). Normally this will be for more complex cases where a discussion may be necessary with the prisoner's solicitor or with other professionals to assist the management of the case. The purpose of a PH is to resolve any issues which would prevent the panel from reaching a decision, and/or to identify issues and how they should be addressed. A PH should not be held where it would be possible to achieve the same result through correspondence.

20.2.2 The need for a PH can arise in different situations. For example, it may be apparent when adjourning a hearing that certain matters may be best addressed

through a PH prior to the case coming back to a full hearing. It may be relevant to hold a PH where there are concerns that a scheduled hearing may not be able to proceed AND it appears to be necessary to discuss relevant matters with the prisoner and/or their solicitor and with other professionals involved in the prisoner's case beforehand. It will normally be the case that, at the very least, the prisoner's solicitor will be in attendance. Where no solicitor has been engaged, the prisoner would normally be in attendance.

20.2.3 It may be that the need for a PH is identified at a casework meeting. It is envisaged that there may be situations where a panel at a casework meeting identifies issues best addressed through a PH. In such cases the consideration of the case would revert to a casework meeting or to an oral hearing after the PH has been concluded.

20.3 Examples where a PH may be necessary

20.3.1 The circumstances in which a PH may be set are not exhaustive and may include:

- Cases where there is a need for the chair to issue directions for the attendance of witnesses or the production of documents to ensure that the hearing will be in a position to proceed AND there is a need to clarify which party is to take the necessary action and in what timescale
- Cases where the responsibility of particular parties requires to be clarified in advance of the hearing such as the identification of the responsible local authority
- Cases where, because of the complexity of issues involved or for some other reason, it may make sense to hold a PH for the purposes of ensuring that actions are being taken in a sufficiently timely way to avoid unnecessary delays
- Cases where it may be necessary to consider issues regarding the capacity of the prisoner to instruct a solicitor or to fully participate in their hearing.
- Cases in which there is Rule 9 information: a PH could be fixed to discuss the procedure to be followed and may be an opportunity for an evidential hearing to then be conducted on the same date.

Section 21 Early intimation of decisions

Date of last review	22 November 2024
Next scheduled review	22 November 2026

21.1 Introduction

21.1.1 Early intimation of the decision of a panel is of benefit to prisoners, victims, and agencies who may have to make arrangements in relation to the supervision of prisoners in the community if released.

21.1.2 Where the decision is to adjourn, early identification of the reasons for the adjournment and the requirements for the next hearing is important. This can assist the Board in collating data about the reasons for adjournments, make casework aware of the steps to take to address the requirements for the next hearing, and facilitate the expeditious scheduling of the next hearing.

21.1.3 Where the hearing results in a decision to release or not release, the early intimation form (EID) should be submitted to Parole Scotland on the day of the hearing by the chair of the panel. The template can be found in the [portal](#).

21.1.4 If the case is adjourned, the continued consideration (CC) form should be submitted on the day of the hearing, with a copy also being sent to deferrals@paroleboard.scot. This form can be found on the [portal](#). It is important that the CC should include a list of requirements, such as witnesses who require to be cited or reports required, so that Parole Scotland can start to take action before the final minute is issued. Timescales should be provided for actions including the provision of information, as these can then be used by the Parole Scotland casework team to assist in case management.

Section 22 Reconsideration of panel decisions

Date of last review	2 May 2025
Next scheduled review	2 May 2027

22.1 Purpose

22.1.1 Rule 19 of the Parole Board (Scotland) Rules 2022 (the Rules) introduced the power for the Board to reconsider the decision of a panel. This rule does not apply to a decision to recommend or direct that the person concerned is released or re-released (rule 19(2)).

22.1.2 The correction of irregularities and errors is covered in rule 18. This broadly covers clerical or factual errors or omissions or other accidental inaccuracy that does not impact on the decision but may require the production of a correction slip to correct the mistake.

22.2 Procedure

22.2.1 The chairperson of the Board (or by the legal vice chair appointed by the chairperson for that purpose) may select a decision for reconsideration where they consider there is or may be an administrative or procedural defect affecting that decision.

22.2.2 Reconsideration of a case may be as a result of further submissions made on behalf of the person concerned or as a result of an internal review. Rule 19(4) provides that a decision may only be selected for reconsideration within 20 working days following the date on which the decision was notified to the parties.

22.2.3 The circumstances of every case considered by the Board and its panels and oral hearings are different. The merits of each case will turn on those individual circumstances and the examples below do not limit or bind the powers and duties of the Board in carrying out a reconsideration. These examples are for illustrative purposes only. Examples of where such an internal review may be appropriate include:

- (a) Where the panel or oral hearing making the decision was not provided with documentation or information that was available at the time that the decision was made, and that documentation or information appears to the chairperson of the Board or the legal vice chair to be material to the decision.
- (b) Where there has been a failure to comply with the common law and primary and secondary legislation such as the Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Act 1993 and the Parole Board (Scotland) Rules 2022.
- (c) Where the reasons in a decision minute do not adequately explain how material controversial issues of fact or law were resolved.
- (d) Where otherwise there has been a lack of procedural fairness.

22.2.4 Rule 19(5) sets out that the arrangements for reconsideration will be those that are necessary in the interests of justice and having regard to the reasons for the decision being selected.

22.2.5 In carrying out the reconsideration the chairperson of the Board or the legal vice chair may take any steps within the powers of the Board and in terms of its duties, and is not limited to the issues which initially prompted the review. Rule 19(6) sets out two primary arrangements for reconsideration although other arrangements can be made:

- a) remitting the case to the panel which previously considered the case for a new decision,
- b) appointing a panel consisting of different members of the Board to consider the case and reach a new decision.

22.2.6 In all cases, the members of the panel that made the original decision being reconsidered shall be advised of the outcome of the review and where the reconsideration raises matters of general interest to Board members, all Board members may be advised.

Annex 1 – Sentence types and calculations

Date of last review	30 September 2022
Next scheduled review	30 September 2022

Sentence Calculations

- Members will be aware that the automatic early release provisions are contained in the Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Act 1993. This Act was amended by the Prisoners (Control of Release) (Scotland) Act 2015, which changed the arrangements for all long-term prisoners serving a sentence imposed on or after 1 February 2016. It is important that members understand the effect of the changes. Special considerations apply to terrorism cases and further information is provided at Annex 8 of this guidance.

Sentence of imprisonment imposed prior to 1 February 2016

- The Parole Qualifying Date (PQD) is at the halfway point of the sentence.
- If not released at their PQD, the prisoner is automatically released when they have served 2/3 of the custodial part of the sentence – their Earliest Date of Liberation (EDL). Unless recalled to custody, they remain on licence for the remaining 1/3 of the sentence, plus any extension period imposed by the Court.

Sentence of imprisonment on or after 1 February 2016

- The PQD remains at the halfway point of the sentence.
- If not released at their PQD, the prisoner is automatically released 6 months prior to the expiry of the sentence – their EDL, and, unless recalled, they remain on licence for the 6 month period until the expiry of the sentence. However, this does not apply to prisoners who have received an extended sentence.

- There is no automatic early release for prisoners who have received an extended sentence. These prisoners can only be released early on parole licence. Their EDL is the expiry of the custodial part of the sentence.

Points to note

- The important date is the date that the sentence is imposed.
- Where a sentence is altered on appeal, the Act provides that the relevant date for determining which provisions apply is the date of the imposition of the original sentence, rather than the date of the appeal.
- The Act also provides for some (limited) flexibility in the date of release. Where a prisoner is to be released by the Scottish Ministers, they may release the prisoner on a day that is earlier than the day on which the prisoner would otherwise fall to be released, where it would be better for the prisoner's re-integration into the community. This is limited to 2 days before the due release date.
- Members should apply the dates provided in the sentence calculation in the dossier and where there is doubt as to the dates provided, this should be clarified with SPS.

Annex 2 Sentences types and calculation of review dates

Date of last review	22 November 2024
Next scheduled review	22 November 2026

SENTENCE TYPE	DOES AUTOMATIC EARLY RELEASE APPLY?	IS AUTOMATIC RELEASE WITH LICENCE CONDITIONS?	ROLE OF THE PAROLE BOARD FOR SCOTLAND (ALL CASEWORK UNLESS INDICATED)	SUBSEQUENT CONSIDERATIONS
Life Sentence	N/A	N/A	Make binding direction about release on licence at end of punishment part of sentence (oral hearing under Part 4 of the Rules). Set, amend or terminate licence conditions. Consideration of recall and rerelease. For re-release an oral hearing is required	Not more than two years
Order for Lifelong Restriction (OLR)	N/A	N/A	Make binding direction about release on licence at end of punishment part of sentence (oral hearing under Part 4 of the Rules). Set, amend or terminate licence conditions Consideration of recall and rerelease. For re-release an oral hearing is required	Not more than two years
Extended (custodial part is 4 years or more)	If not previously released on parole, released at the EDL except for terrorism cases (see	Yes Licence conditions set by the Board.	Make binding recommendation about release on licence at ½ way point – PQD Set or amend licence conditions. Consideration of recall and rerelease. (a decision to re-release is a binding direction). Board may	At Board discretion. Prisoner cannot Require SMs to refer to PB within 12 months

SENTENCE TYPE	DOES AUTOMATIC EARLY RELEASE APPLY?	IS AUTOMATIC RELEASE WITH LICENCE CONDITIONS?	ROLE OF THE PAROLE BOARD FOR SCOTLAND (ALL CASEWORK UNLESS INDICATED)	SUBSEQUENT CONSIDERATIONS
	separate sentence type).		consider if oral hearing is required if recalled in custodial part of sentence. For re-release an oral hearing is required if in extension period	
Extended (custodial part is less than 4 years and total sentence is 4 years or more)	Released at ½ way point of custodial part of sentence except for terrorism cases (see separate sentence type)	Yes Licence conditions set by the Board.	Set or amend licence conditions Consideration of recall and re-release (a decision to re-release is a binding direction). For re-release an oral hearing is required if in extension period	At Board discretion. Prisoner cannot require SMs to refer to PB within 12 months
Extended (total sentence is less than 4 years)	Released at ½ way point of custodial part of sentence except for terrorism cases (see separate sentence type).	Yes Licence conditions set by SMs.	Amend licence conditions. Consideration of recall and re-release (a decision to re-release is a binding direction). For re-release an oral hearing is required if in extension period	
Long term determinate (sentence of 4 years or more)	If not previously released on parole, released at the EDL ¹ except for terrorism cases (see separate sentence type).	Yes Licence conditions set by the Board.	Make binding recommendation about release on licence at ½ way point – PQD Set or amend licence conditions Consideration of recall and rerelease. Board may consider if oral hearing required for re-release	Annually

SENTENCE TYPE	DOES AUTOMATIC EARLY RELEASE APPLY?	IS AUTOMATIC RELEASE WITH LICENCE CONDITIONS?	ROLE OF THE PAROLE BOARD FOR SCOTLAND (ALL CASEWORK UNLESS INDICATED)	SUBSEQUENT CONSIDERATIONS
Children and Young People (C&YP) (sentence of 4 years or more)	If not previously released on parole at or after half way point, released at $\frac{2}{3}$ point of sentence except for terrorism cases (see separate sentence type)	Yes Licence conditions set by the Board	Make binding recommendation about release on licence at any time up to $\frac{2}{3}$ point Consideration of recall and rerelease Set or amend licence conditions Board to additionally consider if oral hearing required due to age of child or young person	At Board discretion
Children and Young People (C&YP) (sentence less than 4 years)	If not previously released on parole, released at $\frac{1}{2}$ way point of sentence except for terrorism cases (see separate sentence type)	Yes Licence conditions set by the Board	Make binding recommendation about release on licence at any time up to $\frac{1}{2}$ way point of sentence Consideration of recall and rerelease Set or amend licence conditions Board to additionally consider if oral hearing required due to age of child or young person	At Board discretion
Short term determinate (STSO) (sentence less than 4 years)	Released at $\frac{1}{2}$ way point of sentence except for terrorism cases (see separate sentence type)	Yes Licence conditions set by SMs.	Consideration of recall and rerelease (SMs set licence conditions). Board to consider if oral hearing required for rerelease	At Board discretion (recall cases only)
Short term determinate (sentence less than 4 years)	Released at $\frac{1}{2}$ way point of sentence except for terrorism	No	None	N/A

SENTENCE TYPE	DOES AUTOMATIC EARLY RELEASE APPLY?	IS AUTOMATIC RELEASE WITH LICENCE CONDITIONS?	ROLE OF THE PAROLE BOARD FOR SCOTLAND (ALL CASEWORK UNLESS INDICATED)	SUBSEQUENT CONSIDERATIONS
	cases (see separate sentence type)			
Terrorism cases – both short-term and long-term sentence prisoners	Automatic early release does not apply in terrorism cases.	N/A	Make binding recommendation about release on licence at 2/3 point – the PQD. Set or amend licence conditions except for short-term cases where a supervised release order is in place. In those cases, release on parole will be without licence conditions. Consideration of recall and rerelease where release has been with licence conditions. Board to consider if oral hearing required for re-release	At Board discretion. Scottish Ministers should make a further referral no later than two years after the Board's recommendation
Home Detention Curfew	N/A	N/A	To decide on appeals against refusal / loss of Home Detention Curfew	N/A

Annex 3 Non-Disclosure information and the operation of Rule 9

Date of last review	6 January 2026
Next scheduled review	6 January 2028

A3.1 General principles

A3.1.1 The Parole Board for Scotland is a judicial body created by statute. Its role is to make decisions on whether those serving sentences may serve the remainder of their sentence in the community, subject to licence conditions and under the supervision of a social worker. It sits as a court for the purposes of making such decisions. The Board makes decisions based on the application of the appropriate test for release or recall, depending on the type of sentence. All the release or recall tests applied by the Board are based on the Board's assessment of the risk presented by the prisoner. The Board must have regard to fairness and the need for public protection.

A3.1.2 The Board must consider all information provided to it which may be relevant to its assessment of the risk posed by the offender, and whether this can be managed in the community. It is a matter for the Board how much weight to attach to the information available to it.

A3.2 Legal principles

A3.2.1 The Board's responsibility as a court includes the need to act fairly and in accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights. It will have regard to fairness, the rights of victims and information providers, and public protection in deciding how to treat the information provided to it. Generally, the requirement for fairness will include a requirement that the offender is provided with all information available to the Board in reaching its decision, in order that they can address this information, either by challenging it, or providing their position in relation to it. This is provided for in Rule 5 of the Parole Board (Scotland) Rules 2022 which describes the dossier requirements and reflects common law and ECHR principles of fairness.

A3.2.2 However, there can be cases where there is information which may be relevant to the Board's assessment of risk, but which it would be contrary to the public interest to disclose to the prisoner. Examples of this might include police intelligence in relation to an ongoing investigation, or information which might lead individuals to be vulnerable to retaliation. Rule 9 of the 2022 Rules is designed to deal with such situations. It states:

Rule 9. Non-disclosure of information

(1) This rule applies where information mentioned in paragraph (2) is determined by the Scottish Ministers, a panel or the Board, as the case may be, to be information which should not be disclosed to the person concerned ("damaging information") for one of the following reasons—

- (a) the disclosure would be likely to adversely affect the health, welfare or safety of any person,
- (b) the disclosure would be likely to result in the commission of an offence,
- (c) the disclosure would be likely to facilitate an escape from legal custody or adversely affect the safe keeping of any person in legal custody,
- (d) the disclosure would be likely to impede the prevention, investigation or detection of offences, or the apprehension or prosecution of suspected offenders,
- (e) the disclosure would be likely to have an adverse effect on national security,
- (f) the disclosure would be likely to otherwise damage the public interest.

(2) The information is any—

- (a) dossier information relating to the case,
- (b) other information identified by the Scottish Ministers as relevant to the case,
- (c) written representations made by a victim in relation to the case, a family member of such a victim, or a family member of the person concerned or any written record of oral representations made by such a person,

(d) other information or document provided in relation to the case.

(3) Where this rule applies—

(a) the damaging information is not to be sent to the person concerned,

(b) a written notice is to be sent to the person concerned

(i) informing that person that certain information has not been sent to them because it has been classed as damaging information,

(ii) specifying the reason, of those listed in paragraph (1), for the information being classed as damaging information, and

(iii) setting out, as far as is practicable without prejudicing that reason, the substance of the damaging information.

(c) if the notice mentioned in sub-paragraph (b) is sent by the Scottish Ministers, a copy of the notice is to be sent to the Board at the same time.

(4) The panel is then to consider the damaging information and determine whether it is material to their consideration of the case.

(5) If the panel determines that the information is not material to their consideration of the case, the case may be determined without having regard to that information.

(6) If the panel determines that the information is or could be material to the case, it may make arrangements for the withholding of the information from the person concerned to be scrutinised at a preliminary hearing or such other proceedings as the panel considers appropriate.

(7) For the purpose of paragraph (6), the arrangements may include the appointment of a special advocate to review the damaging information and make representations to the panel as to—

(a) the justification for withholding the information from the person concerned, and

(b) whether the interests of justice, balanced against that justification, require any additional disclosure of any part of the information to the person concerned.

(8) The special advocate must not disclose the content of the damaging information to the person concerned, their representative, or to any person who is not a member of the panel.

(9) Following any steps taken under paragraph (6), the panel must determine whether any further disclosure of the information to the person concerned is required in the interests of justice, and if so, must make arrangements to send that information to that person as soon as possible.

(10) In this rule—

"special advocate" means an independent solicitor or advocate,

"victim" means any victim of the offence for which the person concerned's current sentence was imposed.

A3.2.3 It can be seen that the information can be deemed to fall under Rule 9 either by Scottish Ministers, by the panel which is considering the case, or the Board. The Board's power to do so lies with the Chair of the Board, and is currently delegated to the Legal Vice-Chair. The Chair of the Board has decided that decisions about whether information should fall under Rule 9 which require to be made in advance of the oral hearing should be made by the Board Chair or Legal Vice-Chair rather than the panel, as this avoids the panel having to put information from its mind if the information is then withdrawn.

A3.2.4 There will be infrequent occasions where the issue of whether information should be deemed to fall under Rule 9 arises within the oral hearing, in which case the panel should make the decision. Where this arises, the panel will require to be satisfied that one of the criteria set out at 9(1)(a)-(f) is met before the information can be determined to fall under Rule 9. If so, the panel will then require to consider what information can be disclosed to the offender as the substance of the information, or whether it is not possible to provide the substance without prejudicing the reason for not disclosing the information. Rule 9(3) provides that the offender is notified in writing although it is likely that where the issue arises within the oral hearing, the panel will waive this requirement and notify the offender orally (using Rules 18, 20 and 24).

A3.2.5 Where such information is present, the offender requires to be notified of this fact, and provided with the "substance" of it (that is, as much information about it as can be safely disclosed) unless disclosing the substance would prejudice the reason for which the information is not disclosed.

A3.2.6 This judgement will be amongst the most anxious which Board Members will be asked to make. On one hand, the Board must have regard to the requirement for

fairness to the offender. On the other hand, the Board must have regard to the interests of the public, and of informants. Where these are irreconcilable, the Board should give precedence to the interests of the public and the informant.

A3.3 Suggested approach where there is “Rule 9” information

A3.3.1 As noted above, information may have been deemed to be Rule 9 information by Scottish Ministers, the panel of the Board, or the Board. Where there is Rule 9 information, the first issues the panel may wish to determine are:

- a) Is the information material, that is, does it impact on the panel’s assessment of risk, and its application of the tests for release?

If it is material, does the panel require to attach weight to it? There may be cases where, although the information is material, there is enough disclosed information within the dossier or from evidence provided at a hearing to allow the panel to reach a conclusion without attaching weight to the Rule 9 information.

A3.3.2 There may also be cases where it is apparent to the panel from the outset that the information is not material, and that the panel will not require to attach weight to it, even before having made a determination on the matter of release. One suggested approach in such cases is that the Chair should raise this as a preliminary matter, advising parties at that stage of the panel’s position.

A3.3.3 There may also be cases in which it is apparent from the outset that the information is material, and that the panel is more likely than not to attach weight to it. In those cases, it may be prudent to follow Rule 9(6) procedures from the outset, before hearing any other evidence (see A3.4 below).

A3.3.4 However, it may well be difficult to reach a view on these issues (particularly whether it is necessary to attach weight to the information), without considering the other evidence in the dossier or evidence provided at a hearing, and giving the offender the opportunity to explore and address that information.

A3.3.5 In such cases, it is suggested that the Chair should raise the fact that the Board has received the Rule 9 information as a preliminary matter. They should advise the offender and their legal representative that the panel will reach a decision on whether it may be necessary to attach weight to the information at the end of the hearing, and that further procedure will depend on that decision. Thereafter, the hearing should proceed in the usual way, subject to the fact that the Chair must ensure that nothing is done which might allow the offender to discern the nature or substance of the Rule 9 information (beyond that which has been disclosed to them in advance or is otherwise available in the dossier).

A3.3.6 The panel should adjourn to make their decision in the usual way.

A3.3.7 Where the information is not material, or is significant but no weight was applied to it in coming to a decision it follows that no further action is required, and the minute should record this along with the decision.

A3.3.8 If weight is to be applied to the non-disclosure information in making a decision, then the prisoner and their solicitor must be given an opportunity to make further representations and the case should be deferred for oral submissions before a decision is made. If further investigations are required these should be undertaken as described in sections A3.4 and A3.5 below before hearing the submissions.

A3.3.9 In casework meetings, the Members should discuss the significance of the information, and whether it may be necessary to attach weight to it. If it is not material, then the decision can be reached in the usual way. If the information is material, but the Members have not required to attach weight to it, then this should be clearly recorded in the minute.

A3.4 Position where the panel may require to attach weight to the Rule 9 information

A3.4.1 Where a hearing has been scheduled and the panel may require to attach weight to the Rule 9 information, the panel should consider whether any preliminary

procedure is required in the interests of fairness, such as inviting written legal submissions, the fixing of a preliminary hearing, or the appointment of a special advocate. The fixing of a separate preliminary hearing may be done if time allows, but one alternative is to call the oral hearing and deal with the Rule 9 information in a preliminary session of the oral hearing. The Rules give a wide discretion to the panel to determine what proceedings they consider appropriate for the scrutiny of the Rule 9 information, and a panel may consider alternatives. This “preliminary” hearing or session may well be taking place after all other evidence has been heard, at an adjourned oral hearing.

A3.4.2 The offender and their legal representative should have the opportunity to make submissions on how to proceed. These and evidence on the non-disclosure information may be considered at a preliminary hearing or at the preliminary session of an oral hearing. In casework meetings, this could be facilitated by fixing a preliminary hearing. If there is to be a preliminary hearing or preliminary session of an oral hearing, then the panel should identify the most appropriate witness who can speak to the reason why the information should not be disclosed, and if required, to the substance of the information itself. They should be cited to attend.. Consideration should also be given to whether a special advocate is required.

A3.4.3 Ten working days’ notice of a preliminary hearing must be given to all parties, although this can be shortened under Rule 14(2). The prisoner is entitled to attend and be represented, per Rule 14(7). Although the Rules do not require it, it is necessary to inform all parties of the appointment of a special advocate.

A3.5 Procedure on Rule 9 matters at an oral hearing

A3.5.1 After the usual preludes, the preliminary hearing or preliminary session of an oral hearing should be convened without the presence of the offender and their legal representative. The panel should then take evidence on the reasons why the Rule 9 information should not be disclosed to the offender, and also, if necessary, on the information itself.

A3.5.2 In relation to whether the information should be disclosed to the offender and their legal representative, the panel may wish to take evidence on whether it is possible to disclose all or part of the information in a way which does not prejudice the purposes for which the information is not disclosed. It should also take any evidence which is relevant to whether the reasons for not disclosing the information fall within the criteria set out in Rule 9 (1) (a)-(f), namely ‘damaging information’ In relevant cases, the panel may wish to take evidence on whether it is possible to provide the substance of the damaging information to the offender or further information on the substance if that has already been provided.

A3.5.3 The panel should also use this opportunity to ask any questions it has about the information itself. However, any such questions should only go as far as appears to be necessary to reach a decision in due course.

A3.5.4 The panel may also wish to ask the witness whether the whole or part of the information should be provided to someone other than the offender, such as the prison-based or community-based social workers. Provision of such information to social workers is likely to inform any opinions they provide on release.

A3.5.5 After the panel has concluded its questioning of the witness either at a preliminary hearing, preliminary session to an oral hearing or in any other proceedings it considers appropriate, the panel must determine whether any further disclosure of the information to the person concerned (the offender) is required in the interests of justice and, if so, send this information to the offender as soon as possible.

A3.5.6 If the witness was questioned in a preliminary hearing or preliminary session of an oral hearing, the offender’s legal representative should ask any questions which they have around the fact that the information has not been disclosed. The questioning must not stray into matters relating to the information itself. It may be appropriate to ask the legal representatives to provide a list of proposed questions in advance. They must also be given an opportunity to make submissions.

A3.5.7 Thereafter, the panel should adjourn to decide how to treat the Rule 9 information. In doing so, it should have regard to the interests of justice and fairness, to the offender, the informant, and the public.

A3.5.8 The panel may decide:

- a) that having considered all of the evidence, it is not necessary to attach weight to the Rule 9 information. In this case, this should be recorded in the decision, along with whether the information was material.
- b) that it is necessary in the interests of justice and fairness to appoint a special advocate (see below).
- c) that the Rule 9 information should not be disclosed, but should be taken into account in reaching a decision. This should be clearly recorded in the decision.
- d) that the information should be disclosed, in whole or in part, to another person, such as a social worker. This can be done in terms of rule 13 of the 2022 Rules, which allows the chairperson of the panel to waive the general requirement for confidentiality. In such a case, the panel should frame the information to be provided to that person, together with a clear requirement as to whether the information can be shared with any other specified person. The panel should then take the views of the person who is being provided with the information, either through an updated report, or through taking evidence from them. The panel will need to consider whether any such report can be provided to the offender or their legal representative, or whether they can attend any evidence-gathering session, having regard to the need not to prejudice the panel's decision on whether the information can be disclosed to the offender and their legal representative.
- e) to disclose all, or part of the information or the substance to the offender and/or their legal representative. It may be that the panel requires to consider

whether to appoint a special advocate before reaching this decision. If this is the case, the panel should advise the information provider of the decision, and the reasons for it. It should then frame the information to be disclosed in accordance with its decision. This should be provided to the offender and their legal representative, and a further hearing fixed for them to make any representations on the information. The panel should then reach a decision in the case. It is very important that each step is recorded in the decision, and that the decision is framed so that it does not disclose any information which the panel had decided should not be disclosed.

- f) If the preliminary session took place in an oral hearing, the decision minute must record any further information disclosed to the prisoner.

A3.6 Appointment of a special advocate

A3.6.1 The panel may appoint a special advocate if it has concluded that the damaging information will be given weight and that fairness requires that it be tested by a special advocate.

A3.6.2 Members should have regard to the decision of the outer house of the Court of Session in the case of *O’Leary v The Parole Board for Scotland* ([see Portal](#)). That was a case where there was significant information provided under Rule 6 of the Parole Board (Scotland) Rules 2001 (which was the previous iteration of the provisions which now fall under Rule 9). In the course of the oral hearing there was discussion about the appointment of a special advocate. The panel decided not to do so, but did not provide reasons for that decision. In his decision, Lord Sandison acknowledged that the Board was entitled to withhold Rule 6 information from the prisoner. However, he did not accept that the Board was only required to consider procedural fairness if it was the subject of complaint on behalf of the prisoner, and was of the view that “...*the provision and maintenance of procedural fairness is first and foremost the responsibility of the body whose procedures are in question...*”. He suggested that the process which should be adopted in terms of the Rule 6 information would depend on the importance of the information. Where liberty is at stake, the highest standards of

procedural fairness were required. In considering the Board's decision regarding the appointment of a special advocate, Lord Sandison said that-

“While it is true that the Tribunal had before it weighty considerations, quite independent of the withheld intelligence information, which might well have led it in any event to the same conclusion which it reached with that information, I consider that the parties were correct in their position before me that, so long as the appointment of a special advocate might have made a difference to Mr O’Leary’s position, even if only to the extent of making a reasonable perception of the fairness of proceedings more favourable than it otherwise might have been, the requisite highest standards were not reached.”

A3.6.3 It is clear from this decision that where the information is material and the panel might attach weight to it, the panel is obliged to consider whether the appointment of a special advocate might remove or mitigate any unfairness arising from the fact that the prisoner had not received the information, irrespective of whether this is raised by the prisoner or their representative. If the oral hearing decides that a special advocate is not required, it should minute reasons for this decision.

A3.6.4 If there is any doubt at all, a special advocate should be appointed.

A3.6.5 The role of a special advocate is to test, by examination of evidence, if the case for non-disclosure of material is made out, and the weight which should be placed on the damaging information. This role must be carried out without taking any instructions from any party to the proceedings on any aspect of the damaging information. The special advocate may communicate with the offender and their legal representative after they have been provided with the dossier, but before they have been provided with the Rule 9 information. The special advocate is prohibited from initiating any communication with the offender, or their legal representative, once the Rule 9 information is served upon them.

A3.6.6 A person appointed as a special advocate is not responsible to the offender or their legal representative.

A3.6.7 If a direction to appoint a special advocate is made, the Board must serve the material on the special advocate as soon as is practicable.

A3.6.8 The primary role of the special advocate is to seek to challenge the classification of some or all of the evidence classified as damaging information in terms of Rule 9 of the Parole Board Rules and to submit representations as to whether the Board should place any reliance upon the evidence. Part of the function of a special advocate is to ensure that the damaging information is subject to independent scrutiny and adversarial challenge - including making submissions (in closed session) on whether or not the Rule 9 information should in fact be disclosed to the offender and their legal representative.

A3.7 Proceedings where a special advocate is appointed

A3.7.1 A special advocate can be appointed under rule 9(7). They must be an independent solicitor or advocate.

A3.7.2 Where the appointment of a special advocate is necessary, the Board has a list of those eligible and available to undertake the role.

A3.7.3 The fee for the appointment of a special advocate will be met by the Board.

A3.7.4 Once a special advocate is appointed, there will be a demarcation between the “open” and “closed” stages of the hearing. The hearing will comprise of two parts:

- a) an open session, during which the offender’s legal representative may make representations on their behalf and cross examine any witnesses called before the Board about the fact the information has not been disclosed on the condition that any questions asked, and any answers provided, are not in breach of Rule 9; and
- b) a closed session, during which evidence can be provided by the witness regarding the non-disclosure of the Rule 9 information in the absence of the

offender and their legal representative but in the presence of the special advocate. The special advocate will also make a submission on whether or not the Rule 9 information should be disclosed – either in whole or in part – to the offender and their legal representative.

A3.7.5 The special advocate will usually attend all parts of the hearing (open and closed session) and will see all of the material – including the damaging information not disclosed to the offender or their legal representative in terms of Rule 9. The special advocate will not be involved in the prior procedure but will become involved after a decision is taken that the damaging information is such that weight should be applied to it and fairness requires a special advocate. They will be provided with minutes of the prior hearings, including those which took place outwith the presence of the offender and/or their legal representative. The primary role of the special advocate is to independently assess and make submissions on review of the damaging information and challenge the justification for withholding of the information. Part of the function of a special advocate is to ensure that the damaging information is subject to independent scrutiny and adversarial challenge - including making submissions (in closed session) on whether or not the Rule 9 information should in fact be disclosed to the offender and their legal representative.

A3.7.6 The panel may elect not to disclose the evidence. If the decision is taken not to place any reliance upon the evidence that will be an end of the matter and the damaging evidence will no longer be an issue.

A3.8 Decision Minute

A3.8.1 Where the Panel has placed weight on Rule 9 information, the decision minute must not disclose the damaging information to the offender. This may necessitate the production of two minutes – one for the offender and a confidential one relating to the damaging information and the weight placed on it as well as any special advocate submissions and the reasons for not disclosing. This would be available only to the Judge in any Judicial Review.

A3.8.2 If the Board decides to reject any submission made by the special advocate that Rule 9 information should be disclosed, the reasons for that should be clearly minuted.

Annex 4 Potential for prisoners to incriminate themselves

Date of last review	22 November 2024
Next scheduled review	22 November 2026

A4.1 Introduction

A4.1.1 The Board has a well-established approach in cases where a prisoner is facing criminal charges or may be facing criminal charges. In such cases, prisoners will be warned that they are not required to say anything that might result in them incriminating themselves. However, some recent experience has served to highlight that, despite a warning being issued, a prisoner may divulge information that could be considered to incriminate themselves in a criminal matter. This guidance reflects a review of the well-established approach with some additions.

A4.2 Procedure for oral hearings

A4.2.1 Where it is known that a prisoner is facing criminal charges, may be about to face criminal charges, or is still under investigation by the police, the prisoner will be warned at the outset of the hearing that they are not required to say anything about such matters. In addition, the prisoner’s solicitor should be warned that the Board does not expect the prisoner to say anything that may result in them incriminating themselves. The warnings should make clear that in such a situation the Board will be required to report the information to Crown Office. Rule 13 of the Parole Board (Scotland) Rules 2022 makes it clear that proceedings of the Board are confidential, but rule 13(3) acknowledges that there may be situations where the Board may need to divulge such information despite the general approach of keeping matters confidential. The chair of the hearing should ensure that they use the standard wording as in a police caution – “the prisoner does not have to say anything but anything he/she does say will be noted and may be used as evidence against him/her in any subsequent criminal prosecution”.

A4.2.2 Where, despite such a warning being issued to the prisoner and their solicitor, the prisoner does begin to provide information that might result in them incriminating themselves, it will be for the chair of the hearing to interject and repeat the warning. It may also be appropriate for the chair to offer the opportunity of a short adjournment where the prisoner and their solicitor can discuss the matter.

A4.2.3 In the event that it appears to the Board that despite the warning, a prisoner has provided incriminating information, then the Board, to the extent necessary in connection with any court proceedings or any person's statutory functions, is required to pass such information in an appropriate way to Crown Office or any other relevant person. It should be made clear that if the prisoner decides that they wish to provide information about outstanding criminal matters despite being warned against doing so, it is their decision, and indeed they may want to do so in order to persuade a panel of the Board to direct their re-release or recommend their release.

A4.2.4 Any situation where it might be necessary to pass such information to Crown Office or any other relevant person should be referred in the first instance to the chairperson of the Board. The legal chair should contact the chairperson immediately by email alerting them to the situation. It is likely that the next steps would include providing the chairperson with a note of the evidence, or simply a copy of the final decision minute. It will be for the chairperson of the Board to determine whether such information should be shared, and with whom. It should be noted that the hearing chair and members may be required to attend court to give evidence in such cases. As such, it is particularly important that all members of the panel take full notes of the procedure followed and warnings issued. In the event that members are required to give evidence at court, then good, accurate and complete notes are very helpful and may even remove the need to give evidence in person. An accurate note should be kept of what was said by the prisoner.

Annex 5 Victim interviews

Date of last review	27 June 2023
Next scheduled review	27 June 2025

A5.1 Introduction

A5.1.1 When a life prisoner becomes eligible to be considered for release on parole licence, victims who have registered under the Victim Notification Scheme are notified by Scottish Ministers. Under section 17 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003, they are invited either to be interviewed by a Parole Board member or to make written representations to the Board

A5.2 Conducting interviews

A5.2.1 Where the victim asks for an interview, an appointment is communicated by letter to the victim, including the time and venue details, and copied to the Board member. Members are intentionally provided with a limited amount of information about the prisoner before the interview in order to preserve the prisoner's confidentiality. The member should be provided with the indictment and sentencing Judge's report. Information should be made available from Parole Scotland to the member on the interviewee's relationship with the deceased for example father, mother, son, daughter. It is helpful to explain to the victim that they are likely to know more than the member about the index offence or parole qualifying date. Interviews take place in private in a suitable venue, or may be undertaken by video conference. A member of staff from Parole Scotland will attend the interview but will not participate in the process. Supportive members of the victim's family are also welcome.

A5.2.2 It is for the victim to decide what is recorded in the report of their interview. It is very important to remind them that the report will be read by the prisoner. It is good practice to agree to write everything that the victim has said in the report on the understanding that they can remove anything they want from the final version. This serves the dual purpose of giving the victim the chance to say everything they want to

the interviewer and feel that they have been heard, while giving them time to reflect, once they receive the report, on what they would rather the prisoner did not know.

A5.2.3 The purpose of the interview should be explained to the victim and that the member conducting the interview will not be involved in the oral hearing process. The victim should be told who will receive copies of the interview report, and how the information will be used by the panel members; that their representations will be taken into account, and that the panel's decision is taken on risk-based criteria. Information provided to the victim will include when a life prisoner qualifies for consideration for release, and the test which the panel members apply and must be satisfied with before someone can be released. Information about what happens to a life sentence prisoner and the standard progression route through closed conditions, National Top End and the Open Estate before release should also be provided. Not all life prisoners will go through the standard progression route prior to release and victims should be advised of this. An explanation of licence conditions should be given, in particular restrictions in relation to geographical locations and victims. How these conditions are supervised is a matter of great importance to victims. Time should be taken to explore any fears around being approached by the offender in the community, together with the procedure if there is a breach of licence conditions or further offending. It is important to remember that a prisoner will have community access prior to release, when in less secure conditions, and temporary licence conditions will be in place. Once the interview has ended, the Board member writes up the interview report using the victim interview template. The template is available through the [portal](#). The completed interview report should be submitted to Parole Scotland within 10 working days. Parole Scotland will share it with the victim to give them the opportunity to approve its content and make any changes. Once finalised the report will be placed in the dossier.

A5.2.4 Interviews are usually face-to-face. Interviews by telephone or MS Teams are offered where appropriate including where the victim resides overseas. It may also be necessary to have a follow up discussion on the telephone after the completion of the report to discuss any changes to the written submission. Commonly, however, the Victim's Team will seek the member's approval for any changes required by the victim and then insert them into the report before it is added to the dossier.

A5.2.5 An interview can be a distressing experience for the victim. They may wish to be accompanied by someone close to them who can offer comfort and support. At the time of arranging the interview the Victims Team will ask the victim if they will need support during the process, and will refer the victim to Victim Support if that is appropriate.

A5.2.6 The Board member should allow between 1-2 hours for the interview. The room should be private and prepared with tissues and water and, if necessary, by arranging the seating appropriately. Victims must be given time to properly express themselves and to talk about how the crime affected them and its continuing impact on their lives. Victims often bring photographs of their loved one, their own written statements, or other personal items with them and may need to talk for some time about them and their loss. At the end of the interview, it is best practice for the Board member to ask the victim if they have support or, having explained the role of Victim Support, would wish to be referred to the organisation. A member of Parole Scotland will follow this up on the victim's behalf.

A5.2.7 The victim may also ask whether they are able to observe the oral hearing. The right of victims to request to attend an oral hearing is now enshrined in rule 30. Registered victims must write to Parole Scotland requesting to observe a hearing.

A5.2.8 Victims should be advised that they can request a summary minute after the oral hearing. Victims should also be advised that where the decision is not to release, the discretion on whether to issue a summary minute lies with the panel. Where the decision is to release, the panel must issue a summary minute.

A5.2.9 It is important to note that under Rule 9 of the Parole Board (Scotland) Rules 2022, the Board can decide that information passed to it should be treated as damaging information that is to be withheld from the prisoner for any of the reasons set out in Rule 9(1)(a) to (f). The prisoner should be provided with the substance of that information unless doing so would itself prejudice the purpose of withholding the information. Members undertaking interviews should routinely consider whether any information in the victim's statement should reasonably be withheld from the prisoner. Where this is considered appropriate, the victim statement should be referred to the

Legal Vice-Chair of the Board who has been delegated authority by the Chair to undertake such duties. Victims can be advised that this mechanism exists, but it is important to stress that the decision on whether information falls within the scope of Rule 9 and, if so, how to deal with the information, lies with the panel allocated the case. Victims cannot proceed on the basis that the information they give at interview will not be disclosed.

A5.2.10 When interviewing victims, members should not offer the possibility of disclosing information, or disclose information about the prisoner, and should refer to section 22 of the guidance for the purpose of this meeting. Members must ensure that victims are aware that they now have the right to request to attend an oral hearing. If a victim raises the question of whether information can be disclosed or whether they can attend a hearing then they should be advised to put a request in writing to the Parole Board.

A5.3 Victim interview training

A5.3.1 Victim interviews are an important part of the work of the Board and the very nature of the discussion can be emotionally challenging. Members should complete victim interview training before undertaking a victim interview. It is hoped that members with experience of one-to-one work will put themselves forward for interviewing victims. This training will cover both face-to-face interviews and those conducted by telephone or MS Teams.

Annex 6 . Victim attendance at oral hearings

Date of last review	March 2022
Next scheduled review	March 2024

A6.1.1 Considerations relating to confidentiality apply to requests from victims, members of the public, politicians, representatives of the media, or the likes, to attend the oral hearing as defined at Rule 27(3). Rule 30 of the Rules provides as follows:

30.— Observation of oral hearing by victim

(1) This rule applies to indeterminate cases only.

(2) A registered Part 2 victim (a "registered victim") in relation to a case to which this rule applies may attend an oral hearing under this Part for the purpose of observing proceedings if authorised to do so under this rule.

(3) The registered victim must apply in writing to the Board to be authorised to attend the hearing.

(4) An application mentioned in paragraph (2) must be made during the period intimated to the registered victim by the Board for the purpose of making the application or, if applicable, during such extended period as may be agreed by the Board.

(5) On receipt of an application under this rule, the Board must inform the parties that the application has been made, and must provide an opportunity for the parties to make representations about the application.

(6) The chairperson of the panel may grant or refuse an application under paragraph (1), and must send the registered victim and the parties a written notice of the decision which includes the reasons for the decision.

(7) A registered victim authorised to attend a hearing under this rule may be accompanied at the oral hearing by one other person (or such greater number as the chairperson of the panel may agree), for the purpose of support, and must provide the panel with the name and contact details

of the support person or persons not later than 5 working days before the date of the oral hearing.

(8) Attendance at an oral hearing under this rule is to be by live link unless the panel considers that another means of attendance is required and is in the interests of justice.

(9) The panel may at any time exclude a registered victim or a support person mentioned in paragraph (7) from any part of the oral hearing.

(10) In this rule—

"live link" means any arrangements by which a person authorised under this rule is able to see and hear, or hear, the proceedings while not present at the place where the case is being held,

"registered Part 2 victim" means a person who has—

(i) intimated under section 17(2) of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003 that they wish to be afforded the opportunity to make representations in respect of decisions to release a convicted person on licence, or

(ii) intimated under section 17(11) of that Act that they wish to receive information under that section.

The Board has prepared separate guidance on the attendance of victims at indeterminate oral hearings which can be found [here](#)

See [section 19](#) for guidance on Publication Summaries.

Annex 7 Permanent resettlement of offenders on licence outwith Scotland

Date of last review	22 November 2024
Next scheduled review	22 November 2026

A7.1 Introduction

A7.1.1 The aims of supervision in the community following release from custody are to protect the public, prevent or reduce reoffending and aid the rehabilitation of the offender. Allowing offenders to transfer to other United Kingdom jurisdictions or jurisdictions outwith the UK, can assist in these aims and be of benefit to the offender and the public in general.

A7.2 Arrangements for transfer within the United Kingdom

A7.2.1 Statutory provision for transfer of licences is found in section 12 of the Prisoners & Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Act 1993. Where offenders subject to licence intend to resettle in another part of the United Kingdom, this can be done by the transfer of responsibility to the relevant local authority or the probation service in the area where the offender intends to live. It is the responsibility of Scottish Ministers to decide if the transfer should proceed. It is the Board's role to recommend changes to licence conditions allowing for transfer to another area.

A7.2.2 Offenders have no automatic right to transfer. Each request will be considered on its individual merits, but the following points should always be considered:

- Does the offender have close family or residential ties in the jurisdiction to which transfer is sought?
- Does the offender intend to reside in the jurisdiction following the completion of the period of supervision?
- Are there any strong compassionate or other compelling grounds to support the request?
- Would the transfer have an adverse effect on the protection of the public, the prevention of reoffending or the rehabilitation of the offender?

- Is the relevant local authority or probation service which covers the area willing to accept the transfer?

A7.2.3 Where responsibility for an offender is transferred on an unrestricted basis, they become subject to the provisions for supervision in force in the receiving jurisdiction, including for breach and recall, and no further contact with the sending jurisdiction is necessary.

A7.2.4 In a restricted transfer, the law of Scotland will continue to apply and the offender will be subject to the same duration of supervision under the same conditions as they would have been in Scotland as well as to any other conditions specified by the receiving jurisdiction.

A7.3 Arrangements for offenders who wish to resettle outwith the United Kingdom

A7.3.1 Different issues arise when an offender subject to licence wishes to resettle outwith the United Kingdom. Such cases are likely to be considered at a casework meeting, on submission of an application by the supervising officer.

A7.3.2 In considering such cases, members should have regard to the fact that a licence or post-sentence supervision period imposed on an offender in Scotland is not enforceable outside the UK and therefore an offender would not be under any form of compulsory supervision by the local authority. It could be suggested that a person on licence can continue to be supervised (and accordingly that the supervision licence condition can remain in force) notwithstanding that they are living outwith the United Kingdom. Supervision might be by way of regular contact by telephone or through internet contact. However, there would be no direct monitoring of compliance with licence conditions, or obvious remedy if they were breached.

A7.3.3 Therefore, when considering any application from an offender to resettle elsewhere, it must be taken into account that if an offender resettles in another country (including the Republic of Ireland, and any British Overseas Territories such as

Gibraltar or Bermuda), the licence conditions, or the post-sentence supervision period cannot be enforced.

A7.3.4 When considering whether to amend licence conditions to permit relocation overseas, the Board will wish to have regard to the period spent in the community in the UK before they can assess whether the circumstances are suitable for resettlement overseas. This is to allow enough time to have passed in order to assess the offender's likelihood of reoffending or of compliance with requirements in the community. In rare circumstances it may be appropriate to allow an offender to resettle overseas directly from custody on their release into the community. This approach may be appropriate where, for example, the offender has been approved for early release on compassionate grounds or where the offender's intention to resettle abroad is considered as part of the decision of the Board to release.

A7.4 Risk issues for resettlement outwith the United Kingdom

A7.4.1 The usual tests in relation to the consideration of risk apply when dealing with such applications. The risk to be considered is not confined to the public of the United Kingdom, but extends to the public in whichever country they wish to reside. Members must have regard to the risk that the offender may pose in the country of residence. Members should consider the release management plan and assess whether the safeguards offered are sufficient to reduce the risk presented to below the required threshold always keeping in mind that supervision while the offender is abroad will be voluntary and there will be no prospect of revocation of the licence.

A7.4.2 An up-to-date risk assessment is essential and when appropriate it must be prepared on the basis that there will be no compulsory supervision while the offender is abroad.

A7.4.3 The Board will wish to take particular care when deciding whether to allow an offender on licence who poses a high risk of violent and/or sexual re-offending to resettle outside the UK where they would be unsupervised, or without meaningful and enforceable supervision, as this may undermine the protection of the public, and fail to meet the risk tests.

A7.4.4 If the offender's resettlement abroad is approved, the decision minute must make clear to the offender that the licence remains in force in the UK while they are abroad, and its expiry date should be made clear to the offender. For life sentence offenders, it must be made clear that the requirement will remain in place indefinitely. It will usually be appropriate to make it a condition of the remaining licence that if the offender returns to the UK prior to the expiry of the licence they must contact the social work or probation service through which they were formerly managed within 48 hours of their return.

A7.5 Termination of supervision for resettlement out with the United Kingdom

A7.5.1 Section 12(2)(a) of the Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Act 1993 (the Act) provides that a person released on licence shall remain under the supervision of a relevant officer of the local authority specified in the licence. In most circumstances, it would not be appropriate to terminate supervision as an offender may return to the UK. In such cases, supervision would resume on the offender's return to the UK.

Annex 8 Terrorism cases

Date of last review	21 June 2022
Next scheduled review	21 June 2024

A8.1 The Board’s role in terrorism cases

A8.1.1 The Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Act 1993 (the 1993 Act) was amended by the Terrorist Offenders (Restriction of Early Release) Act 2020 (the 2020 Act). Section 1AB of the 1993 Act introduced restricted eligibility for release on licence of terrorist prisoners. Schedule 1A of the 1993 Act details the offences which carry restricted eligibility for release on licence.

A8.1.2 Section 1AB of the 1993 Act in subsection (1) defines a terrorist prisoner as a person (other than a life prisoner) who is serving a sentence of imprisonment imposed in respect of an offence within subsection (2). Subsection (2) includes offences whether committed before or after the section comes into force if-

- (a) it is specified in Part 1 of Schedule 1A (offences under counter-terrorism legislation),*
- (b) it is specified in Part 2 of that Schedule and was determined by the court to have had a terrorist connection under section 31 or (in the case of a person sentenced in England and Wales or Northern Ireland and now subject to the provisions of this Part relating to early release) section 30 of the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008 (sentences for certain offences with a terrorist connection),*
or
- (c) it is a service offence as respects which the corresponding civil offence is an offence specified in Part 2 of that Schedule and was determined by the service court to have had a terrorist connection under section 32 of that Act (sentences for certain offences with a terrorist connection: armed forces).*

A8.1.3 Cases of both short-term and long-term terrorist prisoners will be referred to the Board by Scottish Ministers when the prisoner has served two-thirds of their sentence. This means that for relevant short-term prisoners there will be no automatic

unconditional release at the halfway point of the sentence. For some short-term prisoners release will be with licence conditions while with others release will be unconditional. Further details are provided in the paragraphs below.

A8.2 Terrorism cases – test for release

A8.2.1 The test to be applied by the Board in terrorism cases is that before it can recommend release, the Board must be satisfied that it is no longer necessary for the protection of the public that the terrorist prisoner should be confined.

A8.3 Terrorism cases – long-term sentence prisoners

A8.3.1 For relevant long-term sentence prisoners there will be no consideration for parole at the halfway point of their sentence. Where there has been a previous referral of the case by Scottish Ministers and the Board did not recommend release, there should be a further referral by Scottish Ministers no later than two years after the Board's recommendation. The Board retains the discretion to set a shorter review period if it considers that to be appropriate. The provisions in section 1(2A) of the 1993 Act where long-term prisoners who have not been released on parole are released on licence six months before the sentence end date do not apply in terrorism cases.

A8.4 Terrorism cases – short-term sentence prisoners with a supervised release order

A8.4.1 For such short-term sentence prisoners release can only be through a recommendation by the Board. Where the Board does recommend release and a supervised release order is in place, the Board is not required to recommend licence conditions. This is as defined in section 8(3) of the 2020 Act.

A8.5 Terrorism cases – short-term sentence prisoners without a supervised release order

A8.5.1 For such short-term sentence prisoners release can only be through a recommendation by the Board. Where the Board does recommend release and a

supervised release order is not in place, the Board is required to recommend licence conditions. This is as defined in section 1AB(4) of the 1993 Act.

A8.6 Terrorism cases – children and young people’s cases

A8.6.1 The restricted eligibility for release on licence also applies in children and young people’s cases.

A8.7 Terrorism cases – persons liable to removal from the UK (deportation cases)

A8.7.1 Section 9 of the 1993 Act has been amended so that in relevant cases release can only be through a recommendation by the Board.

Annex 9 Cases where the prisoner is liable to deportation

Date of last review	22 November 2024
Next scheduled review	22 November 2026

A 9.1 Consideration of release

A 9.1.1 The Board is required to consider risk to communities both in the UK and in the country to which an offender might be deported. In the case of *R v Parole Board for England and Wales Ex Parte White*, decided by the Divisional Court on 16 December 1994, a discretionary life prisoner convicted of manslaughter applied for judicial review of the Parole Board's decision that he should continue to be imprisoned for the protection of the public, despite his tariff being completed.

A 9.1.2 On behalf of the prisoner, it was argued that "the public" was only the public within the UK, and as a deportation order had been made against him, he would be deported on release and therefore be of no danger to the public.

A 9.1.3 The Court dismissed the application, holding that there was nothing in the Criminal Justice Act 1991 s.34(4)(b) which showed that Parliament wished the responsibility of the Parole Board to be confined to the public within the UK, and the Board's responsibility encompassed anyone to whom the prisoner might pose a threat, regardless of whether or not they were in the UK.

A9.1.4 The test for release is exactly the same as the test applied by the Board where there is no issue regarding deportation.

A9.1.5 There are particular complexities which arise in cases where the prisoner is liable to deportation. Rule 134 of The Prisons and Young Offenders Institutions (Scotland) Rules 2011 prohibits prisoners who are subject to proceedings under the Extradition Act 2003 from temporary release by way of unescorted day releases or home leaves. It is possible for such prisoners to undertake special escorted leaves, although SPS has tended not to permit them.

A9.1.6 This can lead to a situation where a prisoner does not have the opportunity for testing which would be afforded to prisoners who are not liable to deportation. It must be stressed that this is a matter for the prisoner and SPS. The Board's role is to make a decision on release by applying the relevant test, and if the absence of evidence means that the test for release is not satisfied then the Board's decision must be not to release.

A9.1.7 The Board must also approach matters on the basis of the information known to it at the time of reaching the decision. The Board is unlikely to have the expertise to predict what may happen in relation to deportation proceedings, and it should take care not to speculate.

A9.1.8 It may be necessary to have information about how a prisoner is to be supervised abroad, and whether his risk can be safely managed in the place to which he will be released, when consideration is being given to recommending or directing release. There are no reciprocal arrangements in place between the United Kingdom and any other country for the supervision of people on licence. It should be borne in mind that there may be no possibility of recall should the offender become a risk abroad. The Board should consider this guidance in conjunction with the guidance on supervising prisoners abroad, which can be found in Section 21 of this document.

A9.1.9 In all cases, recommendations and directions should be made in accordance with the normal tests and rules which apply including any risks which may be posed to communities both in the UK and beyond, any management plans which may be in place in the UK and beyond and any recall difficulties.

A9.2 Licence conditions

A9.2.1 Recommended licence conditions should be set as for any other case. It is a matter for SPS to liaise with the deportation authorities on the matter of release or to continue detention under some authority other than the warrant of commitment for the index offence.

A9.2.2 There is no need for the Board to look at conditions requiring the prisoner to report to an officer of the deportation authority or to comply with that officer's requirements. Those matters are for Scottish Ministers, SPS and the deportation authorities to resolve among themselves.

A9.2.3 The Board should not involve itself in the practicalities of release or continued detention nor should it attempt to assist the deportation authorities with inventive licence conditions. The whole issue of deportation should be left to UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI).

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Annex 10 Use of interpreters and translators

Date of last review	23 August 2024
Next scheduled review	23 August 2026

A 10.1 Introduction

A10.1.1 In some cases, the prisoner (or witnesses) may not have English as their first language. In those cases, there must be careful consideration as to whether the services of an interpreter or translator are required, having regard to the need to ensure that the oral hearing is fair.

A10.1.2 An interpreter may be required during the hearing to ensure that prisoners can understand the proceedings and questions and to ensure that the evidence of the prisoner can be understood by the Board and witnesses. A translator may be required to ensure that the minute of the meeting and other papers produced by the Board can be understood by the prisoner. Arranging for the translation of items provided in the dossier is considered to be the responsibility of Scottish Ministers. Arranging for the translation of a minute produced by the Board is the responsibility of Parole Scotland.

A10.2 Procedure before and during hearings

A10.2.1 If an interpreter or translator is required, Parole Scotland will arrange this through the Scottish Government's "Interpreting, translation and transcription services framework" in the Board's capacity as a Court. The framework specifies three providers of services and requires them to be used in rank order. It is important that any request for interpretation or translation is made as early as possible in preparation for a hearing.

A10.2.2 It may not be immediately evident that interpretation or translation will be needed. The chair should consider:

- whether such provision has been made at earlier hearings,
- the views of the prisoner, his solicitor and SPS on the prisoner's language skills

- the complexity of the hearing
- the presence of witnesses.

The chair should be aware that prisoners may represent themselves as having a better command of English than they actually have, and the chair should, if there is doubt, instruct the provision of an interpreter. During a hearing the chair should be on the alert for evidence that the prisoner is not adequately following proceedings.

A10.2.2 Parole Scotland will receive confirmation from the provider of the identity and experience of the interpreter or translator and these details should be communicated to the panel, SPS, the prisoner and their solicitor, and any witnesses.

A10.2.3 It is a matter for the Chair whether to permit a solicitor to use the Board's interpreter for any pre-hearing consultation with the prisoner, although generally, this represents an efficient use of public funds, and should be permitted.

A10.2.4 At the start of the hearing, the chair should make it clear to the interpreter that their duty is to the Board.

The interpreter should be asked the following question by the chair:

“Do you promise faithfully to undertake the duties of interpreter to this oral hearing?”

The interpreter should answer in the affirmative, and this should be noted for the minute.

A10.2.5 The chair manages the interpretation process. The chair should explain to all participants that the hearing will be interpreted and emphasise the need, even more than usual, for evidence to be given in a measured way. Interpretation will be consecutive, that is, a participant will give a section of explanation or evidence, and it will then be interpreted, from or into English. It is important that evidence is given and interpreted in short sections; 30 seconds or two sentences is probably a reasonable

maximum for each section, depending on complexity. Participants should understand that giving evidence for five minutes and expecting the interpreter to then give an accurate account of all that has been said is likely to lead to misinterpretation at best, or the loss of important evidence at worst. Board members should discipline themselves to follow this challenging question and answer regime.

A10.2.6 The chair and members should be alert at all times to identify when understanding on either side seems to be awry, and should use non-leading confirmatory questions to ensure that understanding of a particular issue is correct. The interpreter should be encouraged to be open with the Board and to flag up as the hearing proceeds, issues of interpretation or of non-evidential comments by the prisoner.

A10.2.7 At the end of the hearing participants should be asked if there are any issues of interpretation that need to be clarified or confirmed, and these should be resolved as far as possible before the hearing concludes.

Annex 11 Compassionate release

Date of last review	27 June 2023
Next scheduled review	27 June 2025

A 11.1 The Board's role in compassionate release cases

A 11.1.1 Section 3 of the Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Act 1993 provides that-

3.— Power to release prisoners on compassionate grounds.

(1) The Secretary of State may at any time, if satisfied that there are compassionate grounds justifying the release of a person serving a sentence of imprisonment, release him on licence.

(2) Before so releasing any long-term prisoner or any life prisoner, the Secretary of State shall consult the Parole Board unless the circumstances are such as to render consultation impracticable.

(3) The release of a person under subsection (1) above shall not constitute release for the purpose of a supervised release order.

A 11.1.2 It is important to note that the decision on whether to release on compassionate grounds lies with Scottish Ministers, and the Board's role is simply to provide advice, which Scottish Ministers are not required to follow.

A 11.1.3 It is also important to remember that the advice provided by the Board must be based on the Board's assessment of risk. It is NOT the case that the only issue to be determined is whether there are circumstances (such as terminal illness), which might constitute compassionate grounds. If the Board is satisfied that such circumstances may exist, the Board must then assess risk. In doing so, the Board should apply the same test for release that would otherwise apply to the prisoner, based on the type of sentence. The circumstances which have resulted in the referral should be taken into account in making this assessment and may be viewed as reducing risk (for example where the prisoner's illness has incapacitated them to the point where they are incapable of causing harm).

A 11.1.4 There may also be situations where the circumstances exacerbate the risks that the prisoner poses (for example where dementia might increase disinhibition and the prisoner's propensity for violence). The relevance of such matters to the assessment of risk should be determined having regard to medical evidence, and the Board may require to seek the opinion of medical practitioners on the implications of the illness on the prisoner's risk. Other professionals, such as the prison-based and community-based social workers should also provide a report and recommendation in the usual way, but it is important to ensure that they have understood that the consideration is one based on the assessment of risk.

Annex 12 Home Detention Curfew – appeal against recall

Date of last review	28 March 2025
Next scheduled review	28 March 2027

A 12.1 The Board's responsibilities

A 12.1.1 The 1993 Act specifies the criteria by which prisoners may be released subject to curfew conditions. In terms of these provisions, Ministers have the power to release certain offenders on licence at a date earlier than that on which they would have been returned to the community, subject to certain statutory requirements being met. Section 3AA of the 1993 Act provides that SPS on behalf of Scottish Ministers may release on licence a short-term prisoner serving a sentence of imprisonment for a term of three months or more, or a long-term prisoner whose release on parole having served one-half of his sentence has been recommended by the Parole Board.

A 12.1.2 The Board acts as the appellate body for consideration of appeals against revocation of Home Detention Curfew (HDC) licence. Any person whose licence is revoked for any reason has the right to be informed of the reasons for the revocation and of his right to make representations in writing with respect to the revocation to the Scottish Ministers. On 1 October 2020, the Management of Offenders (Scotland) Act 2019 introduced changes to the 1993 Act. In particular, Section 17A(2A) of the 1993 Act provides that the person must make representations within six months of the date on which they were informed of the reasons for revocation. It also provides that the Board can consider whether to allow a period in excess of six months on cause shown. Put simply, this is that there is a good reason why a period in excess of six months should be allowed. Lack of knowledge of the change in law would not normally constitute cause shown but it will be for individual panels of the Board to consider whether a case has been made for extending the six months' timescale.

A 12.1.3 Where the prisoner's whereabouts can no longer be monitored remotely at the place for the time being specified in the curfew condition included in the licence, he or she will be returned to custody but may be released again if remote monitoring

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becomes possible. The Board does not normally need to consider an appeal in such cases as they do not constitute a breach of a licence condition.

A 12.1.4 Where the prisoner decides to make representations, he/she completes a pre-printed form within the prison, and submits it to Ministers, who must then refer his case to the Board. After considering the case the Parole Board may direct, or decline to direct, the Scottish Ministers to cancel the revocation.

A 12.1.5 Where the breach of HDC is denied, then the Board (a minimum of two Members is required) will firstly have to establish whether the alleged breach is proven. The Board deals with these cases by consideration of papers submitted by the receiving prison, which should include the prisoner's explanation for the alleged breach.

A 12.1.6 In these cases, unlike the rest of the Board's work, members are not specifically addressing risk but addressing the merits of the appeal.

A 12.1.7 Oral hearings are competent although, given the very short timescales in this type of case, (the end date of the HDC may be a matter of days away) it is not common for the Board to decide that an oral hearing is necessary.

Annex 13 Oral hearing observation guidance for Chairpersons

Date of last review	23 August 2024
Next scheduled review	23 August 2026

A13.1 Overview

A13.1.1 Under Rule 30 of the Parole Board (Scotland) Rules 2022 (the Rules), registered victims in the cases of life, OLR, and extended sentence prisoners (where extended sentence prisoners have been recalled and are in the extended part of their sentence) have the right to request to observe the relevant parole oral hearing. This will normally be via live link. Requests are subject to approval by the chairperson of the relevant oral hearing.

A13.1.2 It should be noted that the right to request to observe the relevant parole hearing under Rule 30 is restricted to indeterminate cases as defined above. However, Rule 20(1) provides that a casework panel may regulate its own procedure, while Rule 27 permits the attendance of anyone other than a person to whom Rule 30 applies, if their attendance is approved by the panel. This means that in other cases, it remains open to the panel to approve the attendance of a victim, although the victim does not have the right to request their attendance in terms of Rule 30. If such a request is received it would be best practice for the panel to mirror the process set out in Rule 30 in terms of taking the views of the prisoner and providing reasons for any refusal. The victims team has amended the paperwork to be used in such cases, to reflect the applicable rules.

A13.1.3 Live link is defined in the Rules as any arrangements by which a person authorised under this rule is able to see and hear, or hear, the proceedings while not present at the place where the case is being held.

A13.1.4 Where a request is approved, the victim will be advised in advance that they will be in attendance as a silent observer only and can play no part in the proceedings.

A13.1.5 This guidance sets out the process for considering and approving requests to observe, and the management of the oral hearing on the day. It also covers the role of the Parole Scotland victims team in supporting the process.

A13.2 The request and approval process under Rule 30

A13.2.1 At the point of dossier referral, the victims team will issue an observation request form and covering letter (including a section covering frequently asked questions) to any Part 2 registered victim. Copies of the letter template and request form can be found at Annexes A and B.

A13.2.2 When a request is received, the following process will be followed:

- The chairperson of the oral hearing and the other panel members will be informed by the victims team that a request to observe has been received. This will be for information only at this stage while the prisoner's representations are sought.
- Under Rule 30(5), the Board is required to inform the prisoner (and their representative) and Scottish Ministers (in practice SPS) about any observation request, and to provide them with an opportunity to make any representations about it. Although not covered by the Rules, this can include any representations about whether the camera should be turned on at the victim's end. The victims team's processes allow a period of seven days for such representations to be made. Prisoners will be informed that the decision to grant authorisation to observe will be for the chairperson of the oral hearing. The prisoner will be notified of the victim's name only and will not be provided with a copy of the request.
- Where a victim interview has taken place in connection with the current consideration of the case, the victims team will also invite any comments on the request from the member who has conducted the interview.

- The victims team will consider whether they have any concerns or other relevant information arising from any interactions with the victim.

A13.2.3 Once any representations have been received the victims team will provide the oral hearing chairperson and members with a pre-decision information pack containing the representations, the observer request form, the prisoner's views, any comments from the member who conducted the victim interview (where relevant) and any additional comments or information from the victims team.

A13.2.4 The chairperson is also responsible for approving requests for individuals to attend the hearing in the capacity of providing support for the victim. We anticipate that this will normally form part of the original observation request but chairpersons should note that the Rules only specify that details of such individuals be provided at least five days before the oral hearing. It may be therefore that the chairperson will need to consider such requests separately to the original request.

A13.2.5 On occasion there may be more than one victim who submits a request to observe. Each request should be considered on its own merits. However, the victims team will advise the chairperson whether or not the attendance of multiple victims can be facilitated.

A13.3 Matters to be considered by the oral hearing chairperson in approving requests

A13.3.1 The decision as to whether to approve or not is for the oral hearing chairperson. It is good practice for the chairperson to consult other members of the panel before reaching such a decision. Whilst the Rules do not provide any criteria for making a decision, it is recommended that the chairperson should approve attendance unless there are compelling reasons not to do so.

A13.3.2 In reaching a decision, the following factors should be considered: -

Fairness

Is there any evidence that observation would affect the fairness of the proceedings?

Is there any evidence that observation might impact on the willingness of witnesses or the prisoner to be candid and open in their response to questioning? If so, does this outweigh the rights of the victim?

Security

Are there any risks known relating to the safety of anyone observing the oral hearing? This includes victims, witnesses, the prisoner and their representative, the victims team, and the panel members.

Is there any evidence that information disclosed during the hearing would pose a risk to the safety of the prisoner - for example, from associates of the victim who may also be in custody - or could such information pose a risk to the prisoner's safety when released?

In the exceptional case of face-to-face observation, will the establishment have sufficient time to undertake a risk assessment? The victims team will advise of any specific issue beforehand. The decision to permit face to face attendance must be taken by the whole panel and not solely by the chairperson.

Is there any confidential information likely to be raised during the proceedings that would be inappropriate for the victim to hear (for example, in relation to the health of the prisoner)? If so, can this be managed within the hearing by excluding victim observers from that section of the hearing?

Well-being

Participating in the observation may be distressing for the victim. Has the victim been made aware of support available before, during and after the process?

Publicity

Is there any concern that the proceedings of the oral hearing will not be kept confidential, in accordance with rule 13?

A13.3.3 Each case will differ and every request will need to be considered on its own merits, with regard to the factors outlined above. If it would be helpful to discuss a specific case further, the victims team can provide further advice.

A13.3.4 When considering the request, the oral hearing chairperson will have three options:

- Approve the request that the victim observes the proceedings by live link;
- (Exceptionally) approve the request on the condition that the victim observes the proceedings face-to-face if this is required and in the interests of justice (in this case the Rules require that such approval is for the panel rather than the chairperson alone); or,
- Decline the request.

A13.3.5 Once a decision has been made, the chairperson should inform the victims team and provide written reasons for the decision. The victims team will then inform the victim and prisoner of the oral hearing chairperson's decision. If approved, the victims team will make the necessary arrangements to facilitate the victim's attendance (see below).

A13.3.6 If the request is not approved the chairperson should provide reasons for not approving the request as there is a requirement that these be provided to the victim. In these circumstances the victims team will write to the victim informing them of the decision and the reasons. There is no appeal process where a request is not approved, although decisions may be subject to judicial review.

A13.4 Approved requests – preparatory process

A13.4.1 Victims will be provided with support by the victims team before and during the oral hearing and will be made aware of additional support available from victim support organisations, including support available after the oral hearing. Where a request is approved the victims team will undertake the following tasks:

- Secure a suitable venue, convenient for the victim, from which the observation will take place. Agreement has been reached with most local authorities (and some other organisations, through the ‘safe space’ project initiated by the victims team, for observations to take place from suitable accommodation in local authority offices or other suitable locations.
- Write to the victim to confirm the date and venue and other practical arrangements for the observation. (This is contained within an approval letter issued by the victims team).
- Meet with the victim(s) (and if appropriate anyone who the chairperson of the oral hearing has also approved to attend as a support) to ensure they understand the process, answer any questions or concerns, make them aware of external organisations able to provide support, and confirm that they understand the need for confidentiality. A checklist for victims team staff has been prepared for use in the discussions and will include:
 - (i) Confirmation that a member of Parole Scotland staff will be present in the room with the victim(s) to monitor the observation, provide support to the victim, address any

technical issues and ensure confidentiality requirements are observed.

(ii) Confirmation that the victim(s) understand the requirement for confidentiality.

(iii) Establishing how the victim(s) wish to be addressed during the introductions made at the start of the proceedings. They may wish to be referred to as the “family of” the name of the deceased or they may wish for their own name to be used. The victims team will inform the panel of this.

(iv) Advising that, whilst every attempt will be made to ensure the proceedings can be observed without disturbance, if a technical issue were to occur which affected observation, the panel will not adjourn the hearing for that reason and will continue with the proceedings. The member of the victims team present in the room will make every effort to resolve any issue which arises.

(v) Advising the victim(s) of the reasons why a case may be adjourned, or postponed in advance of the oral hearing, and providing them with a glossary of common words and acronyms which may be used during the proceedings.

(vi) Making the victim aware that they may hear some distressing content as part of the observation, but the attending member of the Victims Team will ensure they have frequent communication with the victim during the oral hearing, establishing their ability to continue.

(vii) Establishing the victim’s views as to whether the camera should be turned on/off at the victim’s end during the observation.

(vii) Any other issues relevant to the observation.

- Answer any procedural or practical concerns raised by the chairperson including the mechanism for excluding observers from part of the hearing.

A13.5 Managing a live link observation

A13.5.1 Observation will normally take place remotely using MS Teams with the use of a telephone link as a backup. Where MS Teams is used the microphone at the observer's end will be muted.

A13.5.2 Victims and prisoners will have been asked for their views on whether the camera should be turned on at the victims' end. The default position should be for the camera to be turned off, but the chairperson of the oral hearing and/or the panel itself may decide in the interests of fairness that the camera should be turned on. If there is a difference of opinion between the prisoner and the victim(s) on this point it is for the chairperson (where the decision is made as part of the decision to approve the observation) or the panel itself (after the decision to approve the observation has been made by the chairperson) to make the decision.

A13.5.3 A member of the victims team will be present with the victim(s) at all times during the observation.

A13.5.4 Whilst a panel may regulate its own procedure for dealing with a case it is recommended that the following guidance is observed.

A13.5.5 It is helpful for the chairperson to have a conversation with a member of the victims team on the day of the oral hearing to finalise the arrangements for the oral hearing.

A13.5.6 It is recommended that oral hearings start by considering preliminary matters without any observer present. This will allow the chairperson to ensure that

those attending are aware of the sensitivities involved in the observer's attendance and to agree an approach to addressing these. Parties should be asked to avoid any legal jargon, and if there are any passages of evidence which anyone thinks should be taken outwith the presence of the observers. The parties should be advised that under no circumstances should anyone address the observers directly.

A13.5.7 Following the consideration of preliminary matters, at the outset of the hearing, when making introductions the chairperson should introduce any observers, referring to them in the manner that they prefer as advised by the victims team. The chairperson should also remind all those attending of the confidential nature of the proceedings. The chairperson should remind all parties that care should be taken in discussing certain details. For example, any reference to a release address should be to 'the address specified in the dossier' rather than the actual address.

A13.5.8 Where there are matters discussed in the oral hearing which it would not be appropriate for victim(s) to hear, the victim(s) may be excluded for that part of the hearing. The victims team will discuss the most appropriate mechanism for managing this with the chairperson in preparation for the hearing. Matters which the chairperson may consider inappropriate for victim(s) to have knowledge of include:

- The prisoner's potential release address
- Prisoner's home address
- Prisoner's placement address
- The prisoner's family situation including details relating to any children
- Any other information the chairperson regards as unsuitable for disclosure, for example medical reports or any information that would be potentially harmful to the prisoner's welfare upon release.

A13.5.9 If the victim becomes too distressed to continue the observation or there is some other reason why it has become unsafe or inadvisable for the observation to continue, the victims team member will stop the call from their end. If this happens they will communicate this to the chairperson by an agreed method as soon as is practicably possible. Given that it was the chairperson's decision to allow the observation, any decision to cease the observations should also be taken by the chairperson. It is proposed that the chairperson notifies this along the following lines "new information has come to my attention that makes it no longer appropriate for the victim to observe the hearing". Communications between the chairperson and the victims team will ordinarily be by mobile phone text message.

A13.5.10 In the event of an adjournment or postponement of the case, wherever possible, the chairperson should remain the same for the case being rescheduled. It is preferred that the same general members also remain, however, for practical reasons this may not be possible. In which case the two general members can differ.

A13.5.11 Where after preliminary matters are discussed, it becomes clear that the case will need to be deferred, the victim observers will be invited into the hearing to be advised of the reasons for the deferral.

A13.6 Managing a face-to-face observation

A13.6.1 We anticipate that there will be very few face-to-face observations. The decision to approve a face-to-face observation is for the panel. Where such an observation is approved, the victims team will discuss the practicalities with the chairperson on a case-by-case basis. This is likely to be dependent on where the hearing is taking place and is not covered in this guidance. It is acknowledged that there are likely to be additional issues affecting the practicality of victims attending by this means.

A13.7 Witnesses

A13.7.1 Witnesses will be informed in advance of the attendance of victim observers. In particular, Social Work Scotland have been made aware of the amendments to the Rules and reference to the amendments will be made in the regular training the Board provides to Social Work Teams.

A13.7.2 Although there is no formal process for doing so, it is possible that witnesses may raise concerns about the observation. Where this happens these concerns will be passed to the panel. In some cases this may mean the panel may wish to revisit the approval decision. In these circumstances the chairperson should discuss this with the Victims Team.

A13.8 Confidentiality of proceedings

A13.8.1 The victim(s) will be advised of the confidentiality requirements in the preparatory discussions with the victims team and asked to sign a document confirming that they have been made aware of and understand the legal obligations that apply to them when observing the oral hearing, and the potential consequences if they breach these legal obligations. The relevant document is attached as annex C.

A13.8.2 To address concerns about the proceedings being recorded, during the oral hearing the victim and any supporter attending will be asked by the Victims Team member attending to place their mobile phone in view and to switch the phone off.

A13.9 Decision Summaries

A13.9.2 Decision summaries must be published where release is directed. If the victim requests a summary, this must be provided to them prior to publication. There is no requirement to publish summaries where release is not directed but the panel may decide to do so. Again, if the victim requests a summary, this must be provided to them prior to publication.

A13.10 Monitoring and review

A13.10.1 Chairs may contact the Victims Team after the oral hearing to obtain feedback on the victim(s)' experience and whether there is any learning from the hearing. This can then be fed back to the other members. It is good practice to obtain this feedback.

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL

Insert Date

Dear X,

VNS REFERENCE: XXXX

I am writing to you as you are currently registered with the Victim Notification Scheme (VNS) in relation to (**prisoner name**).

Under rule 30 of the Parole Board (Scotland) Rules 2022 you now have the right to request to attend the Board's oral hearing as a silent observer.

While I cannot confirm the date of the hearing at this time, it is expected to take place on or around (**insert date**).

If you wish to request to attend the hearing, you should complete **Part 1** of the enclosed form.

Please be aware that the Board is required by law to inform an offender of such requests. They will therefore be advised that you have requested to attend the hearing, but will receive no other information than that. Your completed application will not be provided to the offender.

Should you request to attend, the decision will rest with the Chairperson of the oral hearing. If your request is declined, you will receive written notice of the reasons for that decision.

In addition to the above, the changes to the Rules also mean that, should the oral hearing panel direct the offender's release, you will automatically receive a summary of the reasons for that decision unless you have indicated otherwise. If the oral hearing panel does not direct release you may still request a summary of the reasons, in which case the decision on whether to provide the summary lies with the Chairperson of the oral hearing.

If you would prefer not to receive a summary in the event of a release decision, you should complete **Part 2** of the enclosed form.

Please note: to ensure sufficient time for processing, and (if approved) to make the necessary arrangements for attendance, completed applications must be submitted to either the post or email address below **within seven days of the date of this letter.**

I enclose some frequently asked questions (FAQs) which you may find helpful. Should you have any queries or require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I appreciate that this may be a difficult time for you. If you have not already, you may find it helpful to talk to Victim Support Scotland (VSS), a national charity that helps victims of crime. Details of your local office can be found online. VSS can also be contacted by telephone on 0800 160 1985.

Yours sincerely

Victim Liaison Officer | Parole Scotland | X5 Spur, Saughton House, Edinburgh, EH11 3XD Direct Dial: 0131 244 3972 | Email: victimsteam@paroleboard.scot

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

What is parole?

Parole is a system that enables offenders to serve the remainder of their sentence on licence in the community, under the supervision of a community based social worker. If an offender is released on parole, they are subject to be recalled to prison at any time if they breach the terms of their licence. Parole is only granted where the Parole Board for Scotland is satisfied that the risk presented by the offender can be managed in the community.

More information on parole can be found on the Parole Board for Scotland website: www.scottishparoleboard.scot.

Why am I being contacted?

We are contacting you because the offender's case has been referred to the Board for consideration of release on licence.

The Parole Board (Scotland) Rules 2022 came into effect on 1st April 2023. These Rules provide certain rights to those who are registered with the Victim Notification Scheme (VNS). These rights apply to victims where the offender's case is considered to be an indeterminate case under Part 4 of the Rules. These cases are normally considered by way of an oral hearing.

The Rules mean that you:

can request to attend the hearing as an observer if you are Part 2 registered;
Part 2 registered victims on the VNS scheme will automatically receive a decision summary regarding an offender's release, and
You can ask for a decision summary where release has not been directed.

What is an indeterminate case

An indeterminate case is defined in the Rules as:

the case of a person sentenced by a court in Scotland to life imprisonment, detention without limit of time, or detention for life,

the case of a person in respect of whom an order for lifelong restriction has been made,

the case of a life sentence prisoner transferred to Scotland,

the case of a person subject to an extended sentence who has been recalled to custody and is serving the extension period of that sentence.

What is an oral hearing?

At an oral hearing a panel of the Board, headed by a legally qualified Chair, will consider the case in the presence of a number of parties - usually the offender, a representative of the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) and the offender's legal representative. Other witnesses, such as social work or health professionals, may also be in attendance.

The panel will consider the evidence provided to them by Scottish Ministers in the parole dossier. This includes the offender's background and offending history, including the offence(s) for which they are currently serving their sentence; their behaviour and progress while in custody; details of any offence-based work which they have undertaken; and their plans should they be released. The panel will also hear oral submissions from the parties in attendance. Once all parties have been heard from, the Chair will end the hearing and the panel will make its decision in private.

If the panel concludes that additional information is required, it may defer their decision to a further hearing.

Will the offender know that I have made a request to attend the hearing?

Yes. The Board is required by the Rules to inform the offender of a request to attend their hearing. They will be advised that a request has been received, and from whom; however, that is all they will be told - the offender will **not** receive any other details of your application.

Will I need to travel to a prison to attend the hearing?

No. If approved, attendance will be from a remote location, via live video or audio link. You will not be required to travel to or enter a prison. Wherever possible, we will attempt to arrange attendance from a location which is convenient to you; however, some travel may be required.

Can I bring someone with me to the hearing?

Yes. You may have one other person (or such greater number as the Chair of the oral hearing may agree) with you for support. You must provide the name and contact details of the support person(s) as part of your application.

A member of staff from Parole Scotland will also be present at your location, to provide technical support to the panel.

Wherever possible support will be available to you before, during and after the hearing.

Can I ask the offender any questions?

No. If approved, you will attend the hearing as a silent observer only. There will be no opportunity for you to address the offender or the panel.

As you are registered under Part 2 of the VNS, you will already have been given the opportunity to submit written representations to the Board. If you have submitted representations, there may be discussion of these at the hearing.

Will I be in attendance for the whole hearing?

Possibly. Should the Chair consider that any part of the hearing needs to be held in private, for example if evidence is to be heard on a particular matter, they may ask for the live link to be paused. The member of Parole Scotland staff in attendance will be there to assist with this.

What happens if the hearing is postponed?

If the hearing is postponed, you will be advised of the rescheduled date and given the opportunity to attend.

What happens if my request to attend the hearing is declined?

The decision on whether to approve attendance requests lies with the Chairperson of the panel. If your request is declined, you will receive written confirmation of this alongside the reasons for that decision.

Will I be informed of the outcome of the hearing?

As you are registered under Part 2 of the VNS, you will be advised of the decision via your preferred method of contact (telephone, e-mail or letter). You will also receive a summary of the reasons for the decision if the panel directs release. You can ask for a decision summary where release has not been directed, and the decision on whether to provide this will be for the panel

Is attending the oral hearing right for me?

Only you can decide whether attendance is right for you.

There are a number of things you should consider carefully before submitting a request to attend:

The nature of the information disclosed at an oral hearing means that the original offence, as well as any previous offending will be discussed in detail. You may find this distressing. Other matters will also be discussed which have the potential to cause distress.

Your attendance at the hearing will be as a silent observer only - as previously advised, there will be no opportunity for you to address the offender or the panel.

Given the nature of the information discussed, oral hearings are confidential proceedings - both you, and anyone attending with you as support will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement prior to the hearing, and anything disclosed during the hearing should not be disclosed to any outside party afterwards.

Part 1: Request to observe Parole Board oral hearing

The information provided on this form will not be disclosed to the offender. It will be used internally by Parole Scotland, for administrative purposes only.

Please ensure you have read the covering letter before deciding whether to complete and submit this form.

Section A - Your details

Title:	First Name:	Surname:
Victim Notification Scheme reference number (if known):		
If you are the parent or carer of a victim who is under the age of 12, or are an entitled relative of an incapacitated victim, please provide their name below:		

Address details

House number and street:
Town / City:
Postcode:

Contact details

Email address:
Telephone number(s) - please indicate whether home / mobile / work for each number:

Preferred method(s) of contact:

- Email Telephone By post

Should any of the above information change, please advise us as soon as possible.

Reasons for requesting attendance

Please provide a short summary of the reasons you would like to attend the Board's oral hearing:

Additional requirements

Please advise of any additional requirements you may have (e.g. accessibility, hearing impairment etc.):

Section B - Your support

Are you currently in receipt of support from a victims' organisation?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
---	---

If so, would you like your support worker to be present with you at the hearing?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
--	---

If applicable, please provide details of your support worker below.

Support worker details

First Name:	Surname:
Organisation:	
Address:	
Telephone number(s):	

If you would prefer to have someone other than, or in addition to, a support worker accompany you at the hearing, please provide their details below.

First Name:	Surname:
Address:	
Telephone number(s):	
Their relationship to you:	

Part 2: Summary of release decision - opt out

Changes to The Parole Board (Scotland) Rules mean that should the Board decide to release the individual, you will now automatically receive a summary of the decision unless you advise otherwise.

If you would prefer **not** to receive a summary in the event of a release decision, please indicate this below.

I confirm that I do **not** wish to receive a summary of the Board's decision.

Declaration

I confirm that the details provided in this form are correct, to the best of my knowledge.

I understand that if I have requested to attend the hearing, this will be as a silent observer only and I will not participate in the proceedings.

Name:	
Signed: (print name if submitting electronically)	
Date:	

Text of confidentiality document

Legal obligations about confidentiality and disclosing information

It is really important that you are aware of and understand the legal obligations that apply to you when you attend an oral hearing of the Parole Board for Scotland and the consequences for you if you breach these legal obligations.

In terms of rule 13 of the Parole Board (Scotland) Rules 2022 (the Rules) the proceedings before an oral hearing of the Parole Board for Scotland are confidential. The terms of rule 13 mean that **any** information -

- related to a case referred to a panel in considering a case; or
- about any application, document, or any other information provided to a panel; or
- about the name of any person concerned in the proceedings,

shall not be disclosed by you, either directly or indirectly, to any person not involved in those proceedings or to the public.

A person who suffers loss, injury or damage by reason of a breach by you of this legal obligation of confidentiality will be entitled to seek compensation from you for that loss, injury or damage.

In addition, and separately from rule 13, in terms of section 170 of the Data Protection Act 2018 (“section 170”) you may be committing a criminal offence and could be subject to prosecution and, if convicted, a fine, if you, knowingly or recklessly, disclose personal data without the consent of the data controller. You do not have the consent of the various data controllers to disclose any personal data you receive in the oral hearing proceedings. “*Personal data*” has a very wide definition and means **any** personal information relating to an identified or identifiable living individual.

Both rule 13 and section 170 apply to the passing on of information that includes the circumstances of any crime, information about previous convictions, rehabilitation, the management of the offender and the name of any person concerned in the proceedings such as the name of any victim, the offender, any social worker, prison staff, the author of any report, any witness appearing at the oral hearing, the offender’s representative and the members of the panel and their staff. This means that you must not pass on any such information you receive in the oral hearing proceedings to any person not involved in those proceedings or to the public, including friends, relatives and the press and media.

The above paragraphs will be read over to you and any questions you have will be answered. You will then be asked to sign this document to confirm that you have been made aware of and understand the legal obligations that apply to you when you attend an oral hearing of the Parole Board for Scotland and the potential consequences for you if you breach these legal obligations. By signing you are also agreeing not to

breach these legal obligations. If any accompanying supporter wishes to attend, they must also sign this document.

Signed.....

Date.....

Visitor's accompanying supporter (if applicable)

Signed.....

Date.....

Signed acknowledgments should be sent to the following email address:
victimsteam@paroleboard.scot.

Annex 14 Tips for conducting victim observations

Date of last review	23 August 2024
Next scheduled review	23 August 2026

A14.1 Purpose

A14.1.1 The purpose of this document is to provide suggestions for good practice at oral hearings where the victim's attendance has been approved.

A14.2 Tips

A14.2.1 It is important to understand that victims observing the oral hearing are unlikely to have an in-depth understanding of the parole process and may find aspects of it confusing. Although the victim's team will ensure that the victim is aware of the likely approach of the oral hearing (covered within the pre meeting with the victim), the adoption of the following suggestions may enhance victims' understanding of the process:

- i. In advance of the oral hearing, the chair should speak to the member of the victims team who will accompany the victim and any person authorised to provide support. This can allow any potential issues to be discussed, and for the chair and the victim's team member to be clear about the procedure that will be adopted. The chair and the victim's team member should share their mobile phone numbers prior to the oral hearing.
- ii. It is recommended that the oral hearing considers preliminary matters prior to inviting the victims team member and victim to join the hearing. The chair can use this time to explore whether there is any evidence that should be taken outwith the presence of the victim during the hearing. Parties should be asked to avoid disclosing any information which should not be provided to the victim (such as the identity or address of a community work placement).
- iii. The chair may wish to direct all parties to use generic terms to avoid disclosing confidential information (for example, "home leave address", "new partner" etc.).

Annex 14 Tips for conducting victim observations

- iv. The chair may wish to confirm to the solicitor that confidentiality agreements have been signed and seen and remind all parties that observers can be asked to leave at any point, should that be appropriate.
- v. Witnesses should be reminded that if they consider that in answering a question that they risk disclosing confidential information, they should make the chair aware of this prior to answering.
- vi. Once the preliminary matters have been dealt with, the chair may wish to text the victim's team member asking them to join the call.
- vii. The chair may wish to ask victims team member for clarification once joined, that victims and any supporting persons are present.
- viii. It should be made clear that no one should address the victim directly.
- ix. Parties should be asked to avoid jargon or acronyms (such as NTE, LLO or HBR) and instead use unabbreviated terms.
- x. It is helpful if the standard oral hearing introductory remarks are given after the victim has joined the proceedings, as this will allow them to hear the legal test and procedure which will be adopted.
- xi. Parties should be asked to speak slowly and clearly.
- xii. IWhere it is proposed that the victim and victims team member leave the hearing for a period of time, the chair should advise them accordingly.
- xiii. Members should avoid being performative during the oral hearing. The oral hearing should be conducted in the same way as it would be if no victim was present, and it is important not to pose questions simply for the benefit of victims.
- xiv. Members should use the official Parole Scotland background while on teams as this will ensure they are easily identified by the victim.
- xv. Members may find it useful to have a post hearing debrief with the victim's team to share best practice and identify ways to improve the process.