

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201303674, **Scottish Prison Service**  
**Sector:** Scottish Government and devolved administration  
**Subject:** supplies of books, newspapers, etc  
**Outcome:** not upheld, no recommendations

### Summary

Mr C, who is a prisoner, complained that untried prisoners on remand were unable to buy newspapers. The prison had told him that they had a local policy which prevented this. They said that it was difficult to predict how long untried prisoners would be in the prison because they could be taken to court and released at very short notice. Because the remand population was more transient, the prison were concerned that they would be left to pay for newspapers when prisoners were released. Mr C said he was willing to pay for his newspaper in advance. He said it was illogical that remand prisoners could order things like fruit and greetings cards but not newspapers.

Our investigation found that newspapers had to be ordered a week in advance. Payment was not taken when goods were ordered but when they were delivered. Difficulties with the prison accounting system meant that debits and credits had to be concluded in the same financial week, so that the prison's account was balanced. Although we thought that the prison could have explained the position more fully to Mr C, we did not uphold his complaint as we found that the prison's actions were reasonable in the circumstances. We also noted that the Scottish Prison Service had since revised their procedure, and were on the point of introducing a new system that would allow remand prisoners to purchase newspapers, if they agreed that they would not be entitled to a refund if released.