

SPSO decision report

Case: 201503494, Scottish Prison Service
Sector: Scottish Government and devolved administration
Subject: escorting services
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

An escorting agency that provides custody escorting services on behalf of the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) transferred Mr C to a hearing. Mr C complained that he was not escorted appropriately. In particular, Mr C said the escorting crew parked the vehicle some distance away from the location and because of that, he had to walk handcuffed in view of the public. Mr C also said his complaint about the matter was not responded to appropriately.

In response to Mr C's complaint, the escorting agency said that they were satisfied the crew carried out their duties to an acceptable level when escorting Mr C. They said there was no need for further action. However, we obtained a copy of the relevant procedure which outlined the instructions that the crew should have followed when they arrived at the location of the hearing. In particular, the instructions said the crew should have reported to the on-site manager for further instruction. That did not happen in Mr C's case. In response to our enquiries, the escorting agency said that in some situations it was not always possible to keep prisoners out of sight of the public. However, they said that in Mr C's case, this could have been avoided.

In light of the evidence available, we upheld both of Mr C's complaints.

Recommendations

We recommended that the SPS:

- apologise to Mr C and accept responsibility for the failings identified by our investigation; and
- make arrangements for relevant complaints handling staff to undertake appropriate complaints handling training.